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ABSTRACT

Experienced elementary teachers (N=98) described their general strategies for coping with perfectionist students told how they would handle incidents depicted in two vignettes portraying problems of perfectionism at school. Most of the teachers were oriented toward sympathetic responses featuring support, encouragement, assistance, and attempts at cognitive restructuring (getting students who were perfectionsts to view mistakes as normal features of the learning process). Higher rated teachers exhibited greater confidence and described a greater variety of strategies in more detail, but the lower rated teachers generally spoke along the same themes. The teachers' responses indicated that they were able to supplement cognitive restructuring with additional approaches that take advantage of their roles as instructor and authority figure. Teachers can work with the problem directly by helping perfectionists to shape their thinking as they set goals and expectations prior to classroom tasks, to cope with the events that occur as they work on the tasks, and to evaluate their performance both as it unfolds and after it has been completed. (Author/JD)

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Research Series No. 198

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH PERFECTIONIST STUDENTS

Jere Brophy
(with Mary Rohrkemper)

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education Michigan State University

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Abstract

Experienced elementary (K-6) teachers nominated by their principals as either outstanding or average at dealing with problem students described their general strategies for coping with perfectionistic students and told how they would handle incidents depicted in two vignettes portraying perfectionism problems at school. Transcripts of these responses were coded and analyzed for general trends and group differences. Most of the teachers were familiar with perfectionism problems, confident that they could achieve significant improvement in such problems, and oriented toward sympathetic responses featuring support, encouragement, assistance, and attempts at cognitive restructuring (getting perfectionistic students to view mistakes as normal features of the learning process). Higher rated teachers exhibited greater confidence and described a greater variety of strategies in more detail, but the lower rated teachers generally spoke along the same themes. Although their cognitive restructuring strategies were not as explicit as those used in some of the treatments reported in the research literature on neurotic forms of perfectionism, the teachers' responses indicated that they were able to supplement cognitive restructuring with additional approaches that take advantage of their roles as instructor and authority figure. Rather than being confined to the role of outside coach or resource person, teachers can work with the problem directly by helping perfectionistic students to shape their thinking as they set goals and expectations prior to classroom tasks, to cope with the events that occur as they work on the tasks, and to evaluate their performance both as it unfolds and after it has been completed. The teachers offered many interesting and insightful suggestions for accomplishing these goals.

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH PERFECTIONIST STUDENTS

Jere Brophy (with Mary Rohrkemper)[1]

This report provides information about elementary grade (K-6) teachers' reported strategies for coping with students who are chronic underachievers due to perfectionism. This is one of 12 types of problem students addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988), a large-scale investigation of elementary school teachers' perceptions of and reported strategies for coping with problem students (students who present chronic problems involving unsatisfactory achievement, personal adjustment, or classroom behavior). Information about strategies for coping with some of the other problem student types (underachiever due to alienation, low achiever, passive-aggressive, defiant, hyperactive, distractible, immature, and rejected by peers) will be given in other reports currently in preparation. The hostile-aggressive type is discussed in Brophy and Rohrkemper (1987), the underachiever due to low self-concept/failure syndrome/learned helplessness in Brophy (1989a), and the shy/withdrawn type in Brophy (1989b).

Perfectionist Students

Perfectionists are one among four types of problem students addressed in the Classroom Strategy Study who show unsatisfactory achievement progress. These four types include low achievers and three types of underachievers. Low

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[1]Jere Brophy is coordinator of the Classroom Strategy Research Project and is a professor of teacher education at Michigan State University. Mary Rohrkemper, former IRT intern with the project, is associate professor in the Department of Human Development at Bryn Mawr College. The authors wish to thank Jane Smith, Janis Elmore, Carolyn Rettke, Jean Medick, Lonnie McIntyre, Susan Rubenstein, Stephen Katz, and JoAnn Hite who assisted in project planning and data collection; and Jane Smith, Lynn Scott, Patricia Linton, Carolyn Wainright, Linda Ripley, and Sheba Dunlap who coded the data; Suwatana Sookpokakit, Neelam Kher, and Frank Jenkins who assisted in data preparation and analysis, and June Smith who assisted in manuscript preparation.

achievers are students who make limited progress because of limited ability or readiness rather than because of motivation problems (although motivation problems are likely to develop in most such students if they continually experience failure and frustration). Low achievers' progress is satisfactory (in one sense at least) given their limited abilities--it reflects the level of success that can be expected from them given reasonable effort. In contrast, underachievers work below expectations based on what is known about their abilities. Some students underachieve because of low self-concept/failure syndrome/learned helplessness reasons: They become so defeated by failure and frustration that they eventually just give up serious learning efforts. Others underachieve because of neurotic perfectionism: They are more concerned about avoiding mistakes than about learning, so that they are inhibited about classroom participation and counterproductively compulsive in their work habits. Finally, some students underachieve due to alienation: They hate school, or at least see no value in what is taught there, so they do not take academic activities seriously or try to do their best on them. This report presents the findings concerning perfectionist students; other reports will present the findings on low achievers, failure syndrome students (Brophy, 1989a), and alienated underachievers.

Varieties and Causes of Perfectionism

In common language, perfectionism refers to a persistent disposition to strive to meet ideal standards of excellence. Perfectionists are not satisfied with merely doing well or even with doing better than their peers. Instead, they are satisfied only if they have done a job perfectly, so that the result reveals no blemishes or weaknesses. To the extent that a student's perfectionism involves setting and striving for difficult but reachable goals, it involves the success-seeking aspects of healthy achievement motivation (Dweck &

Elliott, 1983) and functions as an asset to the student and an ally to the teacher. Even such a success-seeking version of perfectionism, however, can become a problem to the extent that the student begins to focus not so much on meeting personal goals as on winning competitions against classmates (Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982).

Any such problems associated with forms of perfectionism that focus on seeking success are relatively minor, however, compared to those associated with forms of perfectionism that focus on avoiding failure. Fear of failure (or of blame, rejection, or other anticipated social consequences of failure) can be extremely destructive to achievement motivation, especially if it is powerful and persistent. Such fear typically causes people to try to avoid or escape as quickly as possible from achievement situations in which their performance will be judged according to standards of excellence, and when this is not possible, to protect their self-esteem in such situations by either expressing very low aspirations that will be easy to fulfill or expressing impossibly high aspirations that they have no serious intention of striving to fulfill. In the school setting, many such individuals become alienated underachievers.

Other students who are equally obsessed with avoiding failure do not simply follow the path of least resistance by avoiding achievement situations or minimizing their personal investment in them. These students seek to avoid failure and its anticipated consequences, but they also have a powerful sense of responsibility for fulfilling the duties associated with the student role, including putting forth their best efforts and doing as well as they can do on assignments. Thus, they are caught between a strong drive for not merely success but perfection and a powerful and continuing preoccupation with avoiding failure. To the extent that their failure avoidance concerns become rigid and preponderant, they will lead to counterproductive behavior, undermine the potentially positive aspects of "normal" perfectionism, and result in what Hamachek

(1978) calls "neurotic" perfectionism. Such students will become driven. They rarely feel that they have done things well enough to warrant a sense of satisfaction, and they never experience satisfaction for long even when they do occasionally succeed in meeting their perfectionistic standards.

Pacht (1984) lists the following as symptoms of neurotic perfectionism: impossibly high and rigid performance standards applied to oneself; motivated more by fear of failure than by seeking after success; tendency to measure one's own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment; all-or-nothing evaluations that label anything other than perfection as failure; difficulty in taking credit or pleasure even when success is achieved because such achievement is merely what is expected and because yesterday's successes have no meaning in the context of today's demands; seeking to avoid being judged for fear of failing and thus being rejected; procrastination in getting started on work that will be judged; and continually starting things over again or taking an inordinately long time to do them because the work must be perfect right from the beginning and continue to be perfect as one goes along. Symptoms of such neurotic perfectionism commonly observed in students include unwillingness to volunteer to participate in activities or to respond to teacher questions unless certain of the correct answer, overly emotional and "catastrophic" reactions to what should be minor or routine failure experiences, and inefficient use of time and low productivity due to procrastination, excessive "start overs," or obsessive concern with perfection beyond what is appropriate to the assignment.

The causes of such perfectionism problems in elementary school students are usually traced to parent-child dynamics. For example, Hamachek (1978) suggests that such students tend to come from homes in which they receive either (a) nonapproval or inconsistent approval, so that the child never learns how to please the parent, or (b) only conditional approval that is contingent on doing

things right (where right is defined as perfect). Pacht (1984) hypothesizes similar causes, suggesting that neurotic perfectionists are continually trying to convince their parents that they are lovable by being perfect. Other possible causes, compatible with those already mentioned, include modeling by parents who are similarly perfectionistic themselves and impose perfectionistic expectations on the child, attempts to compete with a "perfect" sibling, and a tendency on the part of current or past teachers to overstress turning in perfect work and criticize the student for imperfections.

Suggested Strategies for Coping with Perfectionist Students

Common sense suggests that these students need resocialization concerning performance norms and work expectations. In particular, they need to come to understand that (a) schools are established as places for students to learn knowledge and skills, not merely to demonstrate them; (b) errors are normal, expected, and often necessary aspects of the learning process; (c) everyone makes mistakes, including the teacher; (d) there is no reason to devalue oneself or fear rejection or punishment just because one has made a mistake; and (e) it is usually more appropriate and helpful to think in terms of making progress from where one is now rather than in terms of comparing oneself with peers or with ideals of perfection.

The goal is to help perfectionistic students to acquire these beliefs and dispositions while at the same time supporting those aspects of their current beliefs and dispositions that constitute desirable aspects of achievement motivation. As Pacht (1984) puts it, the goal is to achieve a 20- or 30-degree change rather than a 180-degree turnaround. We want perfectionistic students to retain their dispositions toward aiming high and putting forth their best efforts, but to learn to do so in ways that are more realistic and productive, less rigid and compulsive. Because perfectionists' problems are rooted in

their own attitudes, beliefs, and expectations, intervention efforts are likely to feature some form of cognitive restructuring. Two of the better known approaches to cognitive restructuring are rational emotive education and cognitive behavior modification.

Rational emotive therapy was developed by Albert Ellis (1977) as a method of working with clients in clinical practice, but its principles have been reinterpreted for use by teachers as rational emotive education (Knaus, 1974). Rational emotive education focuses on identifying and eliminating underlying irrational beliefs or expectations that cause students to behave inappropriately. Common irrational beliefs related to perfectionism include rigid expectations and "catastrophic" reactions to failure ("I expected to get all of them right. Oh how awful! I should have done better. I am worthless and no good"). Once such irrational themes are identified, the teacher challenges, questions, and logically analyzes them with the student in order to replace them with more rational ones. Thus, the idea that mistakes or unforeseen difficulties are horrible and crippling would be replaced with the idea that they are unfortunate but tolerable and should be treated as temporary or minor setbacks to be overcome rather than as catastrophies. Similarly, the idea that poor performance implies that one is a bad person would be replaced with the idea that one's worth as a person is tied much more closely to enduring character traits than to levels of success or failure on whatever skills one is required to perform on particular days.

Cognitive behavior modification strategies, as developed by Meichenbaum (1977), focus less on analyzing irrational thoughts and more on developing effective coping responses to stressful situations. Meichenbaum uses a three-stage process: (a) teach clients to become good observers of their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; (b) make the process of self-observation the occasion for emitting adaptive cognitions and behaviors; (c) alter the person's

internal dialogs so that changes can be generalized. Problem situations are role played so that the person can practice using coping statements before, during, and after these situations. In the case of neurotic perfectionists, the problem situations would center around failure experiences, and the training would teach students to replace catastrophic emotional reactions focused on the self with task-focused thinking that will help the person to profit from the mistake by identifying the reasons for it and taking corrective action.

Barrow and Moore (1983) developed group interventions for neurotic perfectionists that involve both of these approaches to cognitive restructuring (rational emotive education and cognitive behavior modification). Their group members were taught to (a) become more discriminating in setting standards and goals, (b) develop more tolerance for the inevitable times when goals are not met, (c) differentiate the construct of self-worth from task performance, and (d) develop a cognitive coping process to moderate and control initial perfectionistic responses.

These various cognitive restructuring techniques that therapists have developed for use with their clients could also be used by teachers with their students. Teachers are in position to use other techniques as well, however, because of the role-based relationships that they share with their students. First, as the authority figures who both demand performance from students and judge the quality of that performance, teachers are in position to communicate performance standards that students can use for judging their levels of success. In the case of neurotic perfectionists, the teacher's standards and expectations are likely to be more lenient (e.g., realistic) than the student's, so that teacher clarity and consistency in articulating these standards and communicating feedback based on them may reduce the tendency of such students to set themselves up for failure by projecting overly rigid expectations. Similarly, teachers may help such students become more task-focused and less

self-focused by reminding them that a particular exercise is intended as a learning experience where mistakes are expected rather than as a test of mastery, and they can help them to make better use of work time by clarifying the primary purposes of activities and differentiating these from secondary purposes (e.g., explaining that students should concentrate on the content and flow of ideas in developing first drafts of compositions, postponing concern about spelling and the finer points of grammar and punctuation until later drafts).

In addition to demanding and judging performance, teachers act as helpers who provide students with the information and assistance they will need to achieve the performance goals. In this regard, teachers are in position to assist perfectionist students by reassuring them of their interest in seeing them succeed and their willingness to help them do so, by providing consistent encouragement and support; by monitoring them closely so as to be able to intervene quickly when they start to become upset or frustrated; and by providing direct structuring and assistance when they are having trouble getting started, have become flustered by mistakes, or need to be refocused on the main goal of an activity because they have become mired in trivia or side issues. Teachers must be careful to be sure that the direct assistance they provide to perfectionist students does not make these students overly dependent on them to the point that they seek teacher clarification and approval of every step of their work. However, if used in such a way as to gradually wean the student toward a more independent (as well as normal and productive) work posture, the strategy of direct support and assistance can be a powerful tool that teachers are uniquely positioned to employ.

With this literature review and analysis as background, we now present the perceptions of and strategies for coping with perfectionistic students that were reported by the teachers interviewed in the Classroom Strategy Study.

Classroom Strategy Study: Design and Data Collection Procedures

The Classroom Strategy Study was not an experiment but a systematic gathering of self-report data from experienced elementary teachers who varied in grade level, types of students taught, and rated effectiveness at dealing with problem students. Teachers who had been nominated by their principals as either outstanding or average in ability to cope with problem students responded to interviews and vignettes designed to elicit their attitudes and beliefs about 12 types of problem students and their strategies for coping with the problems that each type presents. Responses were transcribed and coded, yielding scores reflecting the teachers' reported beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and coping strategies. The scores were then analyzed to yield two general types of information: descriptive data indicating the frequency of each response in the sample of teachers as a whole and in subsamples differing by grade level and geographic location, and correlational data indicating relationships between interview or vignette responses and ratings of the teachers' effectiveness in coping with problem students. Taken together, these data describe the strategies currently used by teachers for coping with problem students in their classes and provide suggestive (correlational) information about the relative effectiveness of these strategies.

Source and Nature of Data

The teachers were presented with descriptions of key personal characteristics and behaviors of commonly encountered problem student types and with vignettes depicting incidents of the troublesome behavior that such students present. The teachers were asked to describe their general strategies for responding to each type of problem student and their specific strategies for responding to the incidents depicted in the vignettes.

The data are self-report and thus open to memory failure and distortion, social desirability responding, and all of the other threats to reliability and validity that are involved in asking people to report on their own behavior (Ericcson & Simon, 1980; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). However, several features were built into the study to guard against such problems. First, experienced teachers were asked open-ended questions about familiar aspects of their work that usually had involved some prior conscious thinking and decision making. Second, the teachers were asked open-ended questions and encouraged to speak at length in their own words (rather than to choose among fixed alternatives). Self-report data tend to be largely accurate when people are asked about familiar matters that they have experienced and thought about and when they are allowed to respond in their own words (Ericcson & Simon, 1980; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Finally, the teachers were asked first to describe their strategies ("what they would say and do") and second to explain "why" they would respond in this way. Thus, the interview structure encouraged them to disentangle their responses to students from their rationales and justifications for those responses. This procedure likely enhances the validity of the self-report of strategies (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

The Teachers

All teachers interviewed were regular classroom teachers (i.e., not resource room teachers or other specialists) with at least three years of experience. Most taught in self-contained age-graded classrooms, although a few taught in team teaching or semi-departmentalized arrangements. Of the 98 teachers, 54 taught in the public schools of a small city, and 44 in the inner-city public schools of one of the nation's largest cities. Both cities are in the midwest (they will be referred to as Small City and Big City). Small City's schools are representative in many ways of the schools in the nation at large.

Major employers in the area include the state government, a major university, and several automobile parts and assembly plants, so Small City has a diversified economy that provides a variety of white collar and blue collar jobs. The majority (over 60%) of its students are Anglos, but there are significant black (25%) and Hispanic (10%) minorities, as well as smaller percentages of Asians and Native Americans. Many of the minority students attended naturally integrated schools, although some were bused from areas of concentrated minority residence to schools in predominantly Anglo neighborhoods.

Small City does not contain an extensive economically depressed area, so that it does not have "inner-city schools." Yet, the need for information about coping with problem students appears to be greatest at such schools, and it is possible that the strategies that work most effectively in inner-city schools differ from the strategies that work best elsewhere. These considerations led us to include the inner-city schools of Big City as a second site for data collection. Within Big City, we worked in three districts that served the most economically depressed inner-city areas. The vast majority of students attending these schools were from black families and most were poor. Readers should bear in mind that, although we refer to the "Big City" subsample when reporting the results, this subsample was confined to inner-city schools and thus is not representative of the Big City school system as a whole.

In summary, the 98 teachers included 54 in Small City and 44 in the inner-city schools of Big City. The Small City subsample contained 28 teachers in the lower grades (K-3) and 26 in the upper grades (4-6), of whom 7 were male and 47 were female. The Big City subsample included 22 teachers in the lower grades and 22 in the upper grades, of whom 10 were male and 34 were female. All 50 of the teachers in the lower grades were female; 17 of the 48 in the upper grades were male. Information about grade level, location, and gender

differences in teachers' responses to our interview questions and vignettes is given in Brophy and Rohrkemper (1988).

Effectiveness Ratings

Ratings of the effectiveness of teachers in coping with problem students were obtained from principals and from classroom observers. Principals' ratings were collected in the process of identifying appropriate teachers for potential involvement in the study. Principals were informed about the nature of the study and told that we wished to interview teachers who had at least three years of experience and fit one of the following descriptions.

A. Outstanding teacher(s)

> Do you have a teacher whom you consider to be truly outstanding in effectively handling difficult students--minimizing their problem behavior and responding to it effectively when it does occur? Please note the name of this teacher below (Note another if you believe that more than one teacher at your school is truly outstanding in this regard, but bear in mind that we seek to identify the top 10% or so of these teachers).

B. Other Experienced Teacher(s)

> For each "outstanding" teacher included in the study, we want to include another teacher with at least three years of experience who is not as outstanding in effectiveness in dealing with the 12 types of problem students that we have identified for focus. We do not seek teachers who are overwhelmed with problems and cannot cope with difficult students. Instead, we seek the 80% or so of teachers who are neither outstanding nor notably ineffective in this regard--teachers who maintain satisfactory classroom control and who usually can cope with the problems that difficult students present, even though they are not as outstanding as the teacher(s) named above. Teachers who teach at the same grade level as the teacher(s) named above are especially desirable.

Note that the questions called for the principals to judge teachers on their general effectiveness in dealing with problem students, rather than to rate their effectiveness with each of the 12 types separately. We would have preferred 12 separate ratings, but pilot interviews revealed that principals could not make such ratings validly, even though they did have general impressions of teachers' success in handling problem students.

We excluded principals who were in the first year at their present schools and thus had not had much time to gather information about their teachers. Even so, some principals had much more information than others, because of differences in length of contact with their teachers or in frequency and purpose of classroom visits and faculty meetings. Most principals appeared to have little direct (observational) knowledge of teachers' strategies and to judge teachers according to general impressions gleaned from personal interactions with them, the frequency and nature of their disciplinary referrals, and their reputations with other teachers and with students and their parents. We believe that most principals rated their teachers primarily on their success in handling disruptive, aggressive, and defiant students and that they placed more emphasis on their success in containing these students' undesirable behavior than on their success in developing more desirable behavior patterns. This is understandable in view of the limited information that most principals have available to them and the fact that maintaining safety and discipline in the schools is one of their primary responsibilities.

The teachers were recruited volunteers who were paid a modest honorarium in partial compensation for their out-of-class time spent responding to interviews and vignettes. During recruitment they were informed about the purpose and methodology of the study, but not about their principals' having rated them as either outstanding or average in coping with problem students. Since there were more comparison teachers than "outstanding" teachers, the recruiting strategy was first to obtain a commitment to participate from an "outstanding" teacher and then to recruit a comparison teacher working under similar conditions (ideally, in the same grade level at the same school). The teachers were informed that they would be visited for two half-days in their classrooms (to allow us to observe them in action and see what the students and the daily routine were like) and then interviewed during private meetings.

Recruited teachers were assigned to an observer/interviewer for data collection. These individuals were well acquainted with the purpose and design of the study, but they never knew whether the teachers they observed and interviewed had been designated as outstanding or as average by their principals. Consequently, they were in a position to give ratings of the teachers that would be independent of the principals' ratings and were asked to rate the teachers on the following scale.

> Teacher's group designation. Based on information from the principal, each teacher has been designated as being either outstanding or average at dealing with problem students. Into which group do you think this teacher is nominated?
>
> 5. I am confident that this teacher is in the outstanding group.
> 4. I think that this teacher is probably in the outstanding group.
> 3. I cannot decide.
> 2. I think that this teacher is probably in the average group.
> 1. I am confident that this teacher is in the average group.

These ratings were made after two half-days in the classroom but prior to the interviews, so they were based on what the observers saw of the teachers interacting with all of their students rather than on what the teachers said about coping with problem students.

We had anticipated positive but only moderate correlations between the principals' and the observers' ratings because teacher effectiveness in coping with problem students is complex and difficult to rate and because neither group of raters was working from a detailed information base (especially not the observers). However, the correlation between the two sets of ratings was even lower than expected (r = .11). Analyses of the relationships between these two sets of ratings and other measures developed in the study (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988) suggested that the principals' ratings were based primarily on the teachers' reputations for successfully managing their classes and controlling student behavior (especially disruptive and aggressive behavior), whereas the observers' ratings placed more emphasis on the teachers' success in

creating a positive classroom atmosphere and obtaining willing compliance from their students. The two sets of ratings appear to convey reliable (but different) information, but the principals' ratings appear somewhat more focused on teachers' success in dealing with problem students.

Data Collection

Teachers were interviewed at times and places of their convenience. Interviews averaged three to four hours each, spread over at least two sessions. Interviews were audiotaped so that teachers' verbatim responses to questions were preserved for later transcription and coding. Teachers were allowed to respond to questions in their own words. If they asked for clarification, or if they were not addressing the questions asked, the interviewer would repeat or rephrase the question. Once teachers had made their initial free responses to questions without interruption, interviewers probed to clarify ambiguous points, address questions that had been omitted, or stimulate the teacher to elaborate on matters that had not been explained fully. Probing was confined to such clarification and elaboration questions, however; interviewers did not ask teachers about matters that they did not bring up themselves.

Interviewing began with the vignettes, which had been constructed to depict behaviors typical of each of the 12 problem student types, described so that the depicted events would seem familiar and realistic to the teachers. The problem behavior was described as sufficiently troublesome that most teachers would feel compelled to take immediate action in response to it and as characteristic of the student rather than as an isolated event. In other words, the vignette made it clear that the depicted incidents were part of larger, chronic behavior patterns. To ensure that all teachers could easily imagine the incidents as occurring in their classrooms, we restricted the depicted problems to those judged likely to occur within the K-6 grade level range and

eliminated all references to student age, geographic location, or other context factors that might not apply to certain teachers. Also, the students in the vignettes, although identified by gender (through their names) and by the nature of their chronic behavior problems, were not identified by race, social class, or other status characteristics. The identification of students by name (and thus by gender) was not done as part of a systematic attempt to include gender of the problem student as an independent variable (this would have required many more vignettes per teacher). Instead, the names were included because pilot work had revealed that this was necessary for realism. Teachers found it easy and natural to talk about "Tom" or "Mary," but not about someone known only as "a student."

There were two vignettes for each problem student type (rather than just one) because we wanted to see if teachers' responses to a particular type of problem behavior would differ according to the specifics of the situation. Thus, the two vignettes in each pair depicted the same general type of problem behavior but differed in the context in which the behavior appeared and in the particular nature of the behavior itself. We would have preferred to have several vignettes for each problem type, but financial constraints limited us to two. Names (and thus, gender designation) were assigned according to the base rates of problem behavior. A male name was assigned to one of the perfectionist vignettes and a female name was assigned to the other, because no major gender difference in base rates has been established for neurotic perfectionism.

We anticipated that the interviews would elicit general and proactive (planned and initiated by the teachers themselves) strategies for dealing with problem students, whereas the vignettes would elicit descriptions of how the teachers would react to unplanned (and undesirable) behavior that occurred in specific situations. To simulate situations in which unexpected events occur that require immediate response, we required the teachers to respond to the

vignettes "cold," without having had a chance to think about them or make notes beforehand. The vignettes were printed on separate sheets and presented one at a time. The instructions were as follows:

> This is a series of vignettes depicting classroom events involving problem students. Read each vignette and tell me what you would say and do in the immediate situation if you were the teacher. After telling me what you would say and do, you can elaborate by explaining your goals, the rationale for your goals and behavior, or any other details that you might wish to add.

Following completion of the vignettes, the teachers were given descriptions of the 12 problem student types and told that they would be interviewed a week or two later. In the meantime, they would be free to gather their thoughts and make notes if they wished to do so. The instructions were as follows:

> Attached is a list of 12 types of problem student that elementary teachers often identify as time-consuming, frustrating, and/or worrisome to teach. For the interview, you will be asked to draw upon your knowledge and teaching experience in order to tell how to handle each of these 12 types of problem student.
>
> We are interested in whatever you have to say about each problem student type, so that we will schedule as many appointments as we need. For each problem student type, first explain your general philosophy about dealing with this kind of student, indicating why you favor this approach over alternatives that you may be aware of. Then, list the specific strategies you would use. Try to be as richly descriptive as possible, including any step-by-step sequences that might be a part of your larger strategy, as well as any back-up strategies you would use if your preferred method did not work. Explain exactly what you mean or give examples when you use terms like "reward" or "punishment."
>
> In addition to describing your strategies, include an explanation of the rationale for each one (the assumptions upon which it is based; the reasons why it should work). Also, evaluate the relative success of various strategies you recommend. How likely are they to succeed, both in the short run and in the long run? Are certain strategies more successful than others? (We are also interested in strategies that do not work or why your recommended strategies are better.) Include any important qualifications about particular strategies (Are some especially successful or unsuccessful with certain kinds of student? Are some feasible only if certain conditions are present? Are some successful only if used as a part of a broader approach?)

Interviewers were encouraged to probe more actively than during vignette administration, but again without interrupting the teacher's train of thought (unless it had gone into irrelevant material). If teachers did not spontaneously cover questions included in the instructions, the interviewers would prompt them. Also, the interviewer would ask for elaboration if the teacher mentioned some special program (token reward system, Magic Circle meeting, etc.) or unfamiliar concepts or procedures. In general, the interviewer's task was to elicit everything that the teacher had to say about dealing with each type of problem student and to be sure that the teacher's comments were clear and complete enough for us to understand and code accurately.

Data Preparation and Coding

The teachers' comments were transcribed and edited for correctness and for elimination of personal or institutional names. Responses to the 12 interviews and 24 vignettes then were content coded (separately) using categories developed by the authors (from a review of the literature and inspection of a sample of 20 transcripts) and refined until they yielded at least 80% agreement when used independently by two staff members who had not been involved in their development. The transcripts were identified only by numbers so that coders did not know how the teachers had been rated by the principal or the observer. The coding involved presence versus absence decisions in which teachers whose transcripts included mention of the concepts or strategies subsumed within a coding category were scored "1" for that category and the other teachers were scored "0." Once their reliability was established on a subset of transcripts, the two staff members then coded all of the remaining transcripts in the larger set. Codes that they agreed upon were used as is, and disagreements were discussed until they were resolved.

Data Analysis and Display

Data on the frequencies with which categories were coded and on the relationships between these category codes and ratings of teachers' effectiveness in coping with problem students are shown in Table 1 (interview data) and Table 2 (vignette data). These tables are a reduced set of the total findings available, with reductions being achieved primarily by eliminating low-use categories that were not coded for at least six teachers. A few such categories do appear in the tables because they have theoretical importance or because (in Table 2) they were coded for fewer than six teachers for one vignette but six or more teachers for the other vignette.

The numbers to the left of the category descriptions in the tables indicate how many teachers were coded for each category. The maximum possible numbers were 94 for Table 1 and 97 for Table 2 (because codable transcriptions of interview responses were available for 94 teachers and codable transcriptions of vignette responses were available for 97 teachers). Since these numbers approach 100, the absolute numbers of teachers coded in the various categories also approximate the percentages of teachers coded in these categories.

Some of these numbers are followed by a plus sign, which indicates that coding of that category was positively associated with teacher effectiveness ratings (that is, that teachers who were coded "1" for the category had significantly higher effectiveness ratings than teachers who were coded "0" for the category). Similarly, minus signs following these numbers indicate that the category was negatively correlated with effectiveness ratings. Where a number appears without either a plus sign or a minus sign, no significant relationship between the category and the teacher effectiveness ratings was observed. Finally, where no information at all appears in the columns for either Vignette A or Vignette B in Table 2, the category applied only to the other vignette.

Table 1

Interview Responses: Number of Teachers Coded for Each Category and Directions of Significant Relationships With Effectiveness Ratings

N	Coding Category
	A. General Problem-Solving Strategies
10-	1. Control/suppress undesirable behavior (as sole approach)
5	2. Shape desirable behavior
20+	3. Solve problem: instruction/training/modeling/help (to eliminate the problem entirely)
0	4. Help student cope with problem (but not eliminate entirely)
7	5. Identify and treat external causes
3	6. Insight (help student to recognize and understand the problem behavior)
56	7. Appeal/persuade/change attitudes
32+	8. Encourage/reassure/build self-concept/provide supportive environment
	B. Specific Problem-Solving Strategies
9	9. Minimize stress/embarrassment to the problem student
8	10. Support through physical proximity/voice tone/eye contact
6	11. Threaten or punish
30+	12. Proscribe: limits, rules, expectations
50	13. Appeal/persuade
6	14. Establish contracts/commitment to goals
41+	15. Prescribe/tell/instruct/elicit guidelines for improved coping
15	16. Direct modeling (teacher models or demonstrates desirable behavior or coping skills as a part of direct instruction that occurs during private interaction just with the perfectionist student)
25	17. Indirect modeling (teacher models during public interaction with the class as a whole rather than during private interaction just with the perfectionist student)
31	18. Praise

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
14	19. Reward (promised as incentive or delivered as reinforcement)
12-	20. Encourage/express positive expectations
15	21. Comfort/reassurance (when student is upset)
15	22. Kid gloves treatment (teacher makes special exceptions or allowances for perfectionist students so as not to upset them)
26+	23. Build self-concept
10	24. Change the student's task
10	25. Change the student's social environment
11+	26. Group meetings focused on perfectionism problems
19	27. Involve parents for support or problem solving
10+	28. Involve school-based authority figures or professionals for support or problem solving
15+	29. Provide academic help (tutoring, etc.)
12+	30. Get the student off to a good start on assignments (go over the directions, clarify expectations and grading requirements)
38	31. Encourage or pressure student to complete assignments, even if not perfectly (pressure verbally, impose time limits, take eraser off pencil, etc.)
6	32. Take the student off the spot in pressure situations (move on to another student when this student cannot answer a question, etc.)
17	33. Demonstate student's success (describe success using progress charts or objective criteria)
8+	34. Closer monitoring/more frequent feedback
33	35. Show student that teacher makes mistakes too (note own naturally occurring or deliberately made mistakes, stress that no one is perfect, etc.)
11	36. Arrange for positive class participation experiences (allow student to choose when to participate, provide advance notice when it will be required, prepare student to expect errors when doing a new or difficult task, etc.)

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
	C. Methods of Socializing Attitudes and Beliefs
19	37. None
52	38. Explain that everyone makes mistakes
24	39. Explain how perfectionism is counterproductive for the student
18	40. Teach realistic/individualized goal setting (phrased in terms of improvement over prior performance rather than comparison with peers or with standards of perfection)
17	41. Communicate teacher's standards (concerning what should be considered good work for this student or class)
10	42. Explain that perfect performance is an ultimate goal to be approached gradually in small steps (with errors and even frustration to be expected along the way)
	D. Methods of Involving the Peers or the Class
55	43. None
10+	44. Class meetings (to discuss perfectionism problems)
14+	45. Promote an attitude of acceptance in the class as a whole (tolerance of errors, valuing everyone's contributions)
10	46. Public demonstration of student's successes
	E. Methods of Taking Pressure off the Student
13	47. Allow the student to redo the work until pleased with it
43	48. Deemphasize perfect performance (stress learning and improvement over 100% perfect performance)
6	49. Reduce time pressure (allow student to complete tasks at home or after school; allow student to move through programmed materials at own pace)
12+	50. Accommodate to student's standards or needs (adapt to student's needs for perfection by marking correct rather than incorrect answers, making marks that can be erased when the answer is corrected, etc.)
	F. Strategies Identified as Ineffective
48	51. None
8	52. Ignore the problem

Table 1 (cont'd.)

N	Coding Category
33	53. Demand/insist/nag/criticize/punish
6	54. Pep talks/verbal build-up/denying the problem
	G. Reasons Given to Explain Perfectionism
37	55. None
8	56. Frequent comparisons with siblings
40	57. High family expectations
8	58. High expectations communicated by previous teachers
27+	59. High personal standards (student has set unrealistically high personal standards and strives to achieve them)
	H. Miscellaneous
75+	61. Teacher's response includes long-term prevention or cure strategies
26+	62. Teacher's response includes different strategies for differentiated subtypes of the problem
61+	63. Teacher states that perfectionism problems require a great deal of effort, patience, or time to solve
38+	64. Teacher's response includes proactive strategies intended to prevent perfectionist behavior from occurring in the first place (beginning-of-year talks about accepting everyone's opinions, making mistakes, looking for improvement rather than perfection, class meetings, etc.)

Table 2

Vignette Responses: Number of Teachers Coded for Each Category and Directions of Significant Relationships With Effectiveness Ratings

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
		A. General Problem-Solving Approaches
37+	63	1. Improve mental hygiene or coping skills
47	32	2. Shape through successive approximations
30	6	3. Control through demands or threats of punishment
		B. Attributional Inferences
78-	73	4. Locus of causality: internal to student
41	3	5. Controllability: student can control problem behavior
12	2	6. Intentionality: student acts intentionally
94	92	7. Stability: problem is stable over time
89	90	8. Globality: problem is generalized across situations
89	93	9. Locus of causality: external to teacher
84	85+	10. Controllability: teacher can effect change
65	82	11. Stability: teacher expects stable improvement
51+	75	12. Globality: teacher expects generalized improvement
		C. Types of Reward Mentioned
91	94	13. None
		D. Types of Punishment Mentioned
89	97	14. None
		E. Types of Supportive Behavior Mentioned
7-	1	15. None
24	11	16. Specific behavioral praise

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
36+	26	17. Encouragement
19+	56	18. Comfort/reassurance (when student is upset)
19	44	19. Kid gloves treatment
4	11+	20. Involve peers in providing support or help
2	6	21. Involve parents in providing support or help
54+	37	22. Instruction (in better means of coping)
		F. Types of Threatening or Pressuring Behaviors Mentioned
95	97	23. None
		G. Specific Strategies for Responding to the Depicted Problem
5	9	24. No response/avoid the problem
1	12	25. Postpone responding until a more opportune time
15	9	26. Brief management response to the incident
5	20	27. Humor or other tension release comment
70+	39+	28. Prescribe or model better coping strategies
20	12	29. Proscribe: rules, limits, expectations
20	5	30. Identify and eliminate the source of the problem
38+	70	31. Develop the student's insight into the problem
40	33	32. Build the student's self-concept
		H. Methods of Dealing With Beth's Concerns
16-		33. None
22		34. Reassures Beth that whatever picture she turns in will be acceptable
6+		35. Cautions Beth not to worry about what peers are doing or to judge her work by comparing it to theirs
16		36. Attacks Beth's perfectionism (accepts her criticism of her work but labels her expectations as too high or rigid and cautions her not to be so hard on herself)

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
24		37. Attributes problem to poor goal setting and planning skills rather than to lack of artistic talent; helps by asking questions or making suggestions concerning a realistic plan for constructing an acceptable picture
20		38. Points out that mistakes are normal, everyone makes them, they are helpful because we learn from them, etc.
24		39. Rejects Beth's claims that she can't do the task and tries to cajole/demand/encourage her to do it
36		40. Not only rejects Beth's perceptions of failure but relabels all or part of her picture as successful, or at least as a good start
		I. Methods of Getting Beth Started Again
27		41. Pressure her to complete the picture (note time constraints, limited paper supply, etc.)
36		42. Encourage Beth to finish or appeal to her using personalized or logical arguments
15		43. Help her to plan how to salvage one of her existing efforts and still finish within the available time
7		44. Stay with Beth and work with her continuously until the picture is done
		J. Methods of Dealing With the Time Constraints
37		45. None
24-		46. Pressure her to finish quickly
12+		47. Have Beth turn in whatever she has finished when the time runs out, even if it is not complete
39		48. Allow Beth to continue to work on the picture after the time limit or to complete it at some later time
		K. Methods of Responding to Chris's Mistake
	6	49. None
	7	50. Give him the answer or elicit it by giving clues or rephrasing the question
	54	51. Simply tell him that his answer was not correct, then go on to give the answer or to get a new response from him or from someone else

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
	14	52. "Softened" negation (tell Chris that his response is "not quite" or "not exactly" correct)
	9	53. Respond only to the correct part of Chris's answer
		L. Methods of Responding to Chris's Anxiety or Embarrassment
	39	54. Get Chris "off the spot" by giving the answer or making a minimal response and then moving quickly on to someone else
	12+	55. Create an immediate success experience (repeat the question or ask a new question to allow him to achieve success on this turn)
	7+	56. Create a later success experience (move on now but get back to him soon with another question that he can answer successfully)
	55+	57. Show acceptance or reassure (make clear to Chris that his input is valued whether right or wrong, that we all make mistakes, that mistakes are not so bad, etc.)
	12	58. Humor or tension reduction comments designed to help Chris to be able to laugh at his mistake or feel less anxious about it
		M. Rationales or Justifications for Behavior Change Demands
12	51	59. No behavior change demands made
21	26	60. Offers no rationales or justifications for demands
34	0	61. Cites school or classroom rules
9	2	62. Makes personal appeal to student
34	15	63. Logical analysis linking perfectionism to outcomes that are contrary to the student's best interests
6+	9	64. Appeals to student's pride or positive self-concept
		N. Methods for Following up on the Incident
65-	43	65. None
7+	35	66. Socialize attitudes or beliefs
4	10	67. Conference with parents
6		68. Teach Beth organization skills (goal setting, planning, etc.)
16+		69. Structure tasks for her (break them into smaller segments, provide more detailed instructions, etc.)

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
	13	70. Make sure that Chris enjoys frequent success experiences
	7	71. Teach better emotional coping skills
		O. Teacher's Goals in Working With Beth
24-		72. Goals are confined to the immediate situation depicted in the vignette, and are centered around getting Beth to complete the task (no attempt to work on the larger perfectionism problem)
16		73. Teach Beth to think in terms of completing what she starts
7+		74. Teach Beth to set goals in terms of improvement over her own prior performance, and to stop comparing herself destructively with peers
28		75. Teach Beth more realistic goal setting (You do not have to be perfect, mistakes are acceptable, strive for what is possible rather than for perfection, etc.)
16		76. Teach Beth to plan her work before beginning the task and to adjust plans in order to salvage what has been accomplished so far
34+		77. Arrange for Beth to experience success frequently and/or praise her work and try to get her to redefine it as successful
		P. Content of Socialization Messages to Chris
	11	78. Deliberate avoidance (teacher would not speak to Chris at all about the problem, believing that any such discussion would only worsen the problem)
	71	79. Tries to show Chris that no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, mistakes are no big deal, we learn from mistakes, etc.)
	8	80. Tries to show Chris that he is limiting or hurting himself by needlessly criticizing himself or maintaining overly high and rigid expectations
	9	81. Communicates recognition that Chris is upset and notes that it is all right to feel bad, that he might want to leave the group until he recovers, etc.
	7	82. Communicates sympathy for Chris's embarrassment
	6	83. Attempts to deny that Chris made an error at all ("You were right," "All answers are good," etc.)

Table 2 (cont'd.)

Vig. A	Vig. B	Coding Category
	7	84. Instructs in coping strategies--tells Chris what to think, do, or say to himself in these situations
		Q. Miscellaneous
7	38	85. Teacher would use self as a model in trying to show student that everyone makes mistakes, we learn from mistakes, etc.
79		86. Teacher accepts or at least does not challenge Beth's low opinion of her work
30+		87. Teacher would hang up Beth's picture for display in the classroom

The plus and minus signs reflect significant relationships that appeared in either or both of two analyses relating the coding categories to teacher effectiveness ratings. The first analysis correlated teachers' scores (0 vs. 1) for the coding categories with numbers reflecting their principals' opinions of their effectiveness in coping with problem students (1 = average, 2 = outstanding). For these analyses, correlations that reached the .05 level of statistical significance (typically corresponding to r's of $\pm$ .17 or higher) were considered significant.

The second set of analyses involved comparing extreme groups identified by considering the principals' and the observers' ratings in combination. Specifically, these analyses involved comparing the 23 teachers who were both classified as outstanding by the principals and rated high (either 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale) by the observers with the 20 teachers who were both classified as average by the principals and rated low (1 or 2 on the 5-point scale) by the observers. For these extreme groups analyses, the numbers of teachers in each group that were coded for a particular category were expressed as proportions of the total numbers in the group (e.g., 23 or 20), and then a one-way analysis of variance was run to test the statistical significance of the difference in proportion scores. When the F-values from these analyses were large enough to reach the .05 level of statistical significance, the relationships they reflected were identified by inserting plus or minus signs into the tables.

Thus, plus or minus signs in the tables indicate that the signified relationship was supported by statistically significant findings from the correlations with principals' ratings, the analyses of variance comparing extreme groups, or both. We chose to include significant extreme groups differences along with significant correlations with the principals' ratings when reporting our findings because, although we believe that the principals' ratings were generally more valid and based on more directly relevant information than the

observers' ratings, we also believe that some principals put too much emphasis on the teachers' abilities to control disruptive students during conflict situations and not enough on teachers' abilities to help such students develop better attitudes and coping skills or to help problem student types (failure syndrome, perfectionist, immature, shy/withdrawn) that appear to require sympathy and encouragement more than control or discipline. The observers' ratings appear to have taken these teacher characteristics into account, so that this perspective is reflected in the extreme groups analyses (which reflect the observers' as well as the principals' opinions).

In addition to the analyses run for the total sample, correlations of coding category scores with principals' effectiveness ratings were also computed separately for teachers working in the early grades (K-3) versus the later grades (4-6) and for teachers working in Small City versus Big City. These subsample correlations generally paralleled the correlations for the sample as a whole, although occasionally contrasting patterns were observed suggesting that what is effective in the early grades or in Small City differs from what is effective in the later grades or in Big City. These grade-level and location differences are not shown in the tables but are described in the text.

Responses to the General Strategy Interview

Perfectionistic students were described to the teachers as follows:

> These children are unduly anxious about making mistakes. Their self-imposed standards are unrealistically high, so they that are never satisfied with their work (when they should be).
>
> 1. too much of a "perfectionist"
> 2. often anxious/fearful/frustrated about quality of work
> 3. holds back from class participation unless sure of self

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The first eight categories (Section A) in Table 1 reflect the teachers' general problem-solving approaches. These data indicate that a majority (56)

of the teachers mentioned some attempt to appeal to, persuade, or change the attitudes of perfectionistic students, and that in addition or instead, 32 teachers mentioned attempts to encourage, reassure, build the self-concept of, or provide a supportive environment for these students, and 20 mentioned providing some form of instruction, training, modeling, or help to these students that was designed to eliminate the problem. Thus, persuasion, encouragement, and assistance were the most frequently mentioned responses to neurotic perfectionism. In addition, 10 teachers indicated that their response would be restricted to attempts to control or suppress the problem behavior (without also mentioning persuasion, encouragement, assistance, or other general approaches), and 7 teachers spoke of attempts to identify and treat external causes of the problem (e.g., overly rigid parental pressures for perfection). The remaining general approaches were mentioned by five or fewer teachers.

Similar trends can be seen in the frequencies with which the teachers mentioned more specific problem-solving strategies (Section B). The most commonly mentioned strategies were appeal or persuasion (50), prescribing/telling/instructing/eliciting guidelines for improved coping (41), pressuring the student to complete assignments even if they are not done perfectly (38), showing the student that the teacher makes mistakes too (33), praising the student's accomplishments (31), proscribing by imposing limits or stating rules, for example, about turning in work completed and on time (30), attempting to build up the student's self-concept (26), and indirect modeling of appropriate attitudes about and effective coping responses to failure (25). Again we see the commonly mentioned themes of persuasion, encouragement, and assistance, along with pressure for timely completion of assignments.

Strategies mentioned less frequently were involving the parents to provide support or assistance in solving the problem (19), demonstrating the student's progress or success levels by using progress charts or showing earlier work

(17), direct modeling of constructive responses to failure (15), providing comfort or reassurance when the student is upset (15), kid gloves treatment in the form of special exceptions or allowances (15), providing tutoring or other academic help (15), offering rewards as incentives or delivering them as reinforcement (14), attempting to encourage by expressing positive expectations that the problem will be solved (12), providing help to make sure that the student gets off to a good start on assignments (12), group meetings focused on discussion of perfectionism problems (11), taking steps to ensure that the class participation experiences of perfectionistic students will be positive ones (11), changing the student's task to something easier or less frustrating (10), changing the student's social environment, such as by placing the student with similar students (10), involving school-based professionals such as counselors or social workers to help in solving the problem (10), attempting to minimize the degree to which the perfectionistic student encounters stress or embarrassment (9), providing support through physical proximity, voice tone, or eye contact (8), monitoring the student closely and checking back frequently to provide any needed feedback or assistance (8), threatening punishment for failure to improve (6), attempting to negotiate behavior contracts or establish commitment to behavioral improvement goals (6), and moving quickly to take the student off the spot in pressure situations (6).

Responses that do not appear in the table because they were mentioned by fewer than six teachers included denying that a problem existed; stating that a problem existed but nothing could be done about it; attempting to delegate responsibility for dealing with the problem to someone else; confining the response to attempts to extinguish the behavior by ignoring it; confining the response to minimal interventions such as redirection of the student to some other activity during stressful situations; using humor or other tension release mechanisms during stressful situations; attempts to inhibit undesirable

behavior through physical proximity, voice tone, or eye contact; time out; personal criticism of the student; attempts to identify and eliminate an external source of the problem; counseling designed to increase the student's insight; attempting to build a close personal relationship with the student and then work through that relationship to change the student; seating the student in isolation from peers; asking peers to provide support or assistance; asking peers to pressure the problem student; asking the parents or the principal to pressure or punish the problem student; simply ignoring or overlooking the student's mistakes; and accommodating by reducing performance standards rather than by attempting to help the student become able to meet those standards. Most of these rarely or never mentioned strategies either were irrelevant to perfectionism problems or involved responding to them with criticism, threat, or punishment instead of persuasion, encouragement, or assistance.

The data in Section C concern methods of socializing attitudes and beliefs. Three-fourths of the teachers mentioned such socialization attempts, and more than half (52) of the teachers mentioned trying to get the student to see that everyone makes mistakes, no one is perfect, mistakes are no big deal, we learn from them, and so on. Other socialization attempts included explaining how perfectionism is counterproductive for the student (24), trying to teach the student to set more realistic or individualized goals (18), communicating the teacher's standards more clearly or forcefully in an attempt to get the student to use these standards rather than his or her own more rigid standards (17), and explaining that perfect performance is an ultimate goal to be approached gradually in small steps rather than something to be expected on the first try (10).

Section D concerns methods of involving individual peers or the class as a whole. Fewer than half of the teachers mentioned methods classified in this category, and the methods that they did mention involved the peers merely in

audience roles or as members of a group that included the perfectionistic student: promoting an attitude of acceptance--tolerance of errors, valuing of everyone's contributions--in the class as a whole (14), providing opportunities for public demonstration of the perfectionistic student's successes (10), and holding class meetings to discuss perfectionism problems (10). More direct peer involvement methods such as assigning perfectionistic students to tutor classmates or younger students or assigning individual peers to act as buddies or resource persons to perfectionistic students (to help them settle down and get back on track when they became frustrated) were mentioned only rarely in the interviews concerning perfectionists, even though such methods were mentioned frequently in response to other problem student types.

Section E concerns methods of reducing the pressures experienced by perfectionistic students. More than half of the teachers mentioned one or more of these methods, of which the most common was articulating teacher expectations that stressed learning and improvement over 100% perfect performance on assignments (43). Less frequently mentioned methods included allowing the student to redo the work until he or she was pleased with it (13), accommodating to the student's needs for perfect papers, such as by marking the correct answers rather than the incorrect ones or making tiny correction marks that could be erased easily when the answer was corrected, so that the student would end up with a perfect paper (12), and reducing time pressures by allowing the student to complete tasks at home or after school or allowing the student to move through programmed materials at his or her own pace (6).

Section F provides data on the strategies that the teachers rejected as ineffective. The most frequently mentioned of these (by 33 teachers) involved some combination of criticizing or nagging the student, insisting on improved behavior, or threatening punishment for failure to improve. Other strategies mentioned as ineffective included simply ignoring the problem (8) and giving

the student pep talks or verbal build-ups that have the effect of denying the problem rather than confronting it (6).

Section G provides data on the reasons offered as explanations for perfectionism. The most commonly mentioned reason was overly high or rigid family expectations projected onto the child (40). Other reasons mentioned included the child's own unrealistically high personal standards (27), parental tendency to compare the child frequently with siblings (8), and overly high or rigid expectations communicated by previous teachers (8).

The remaining data (Section H) indicate that a sizable majority (75) of the teachers mentioned long-term prevention or cure strategies in addition to or instead of strategies for immediate response to specific incidents, 26 mentioned different strategies linked to differentiated subtypes of perfectionistic students (such as those who were being overly pressured for perfection by their parents vs. those who were pressuring themselves), 61 mentioned that improvement probably would occur only gradually over a long time frame and would require patience and persistent teacher efforts, and 38 mentioned strategies for proactively preventing perfectionism problems from occurring in the first place (by establishing a supportive learning environment and appropriate expectations at the beginning of the year).

Taken together, the frequency data in Table 1 indicate that the teachers considered perfectionism (at least to the degree described in our definition) to be a serious problem calling for remediation efforts rather than a minor problem to be mostly ignored, although most of them also viewed it as a problem that they could handle themselves without assistance from the principal or from school-based counselors or social workers. Most of the teachers said that they would respond with some combination of strategies that emphasized persuasion or attitude change (designed to get the student to adopt more realistic goals and expectations and to come to see that everyone makes mistakes and one should not

overreact to them), encouragement and self-concept support, and assistance (making sure that the student gets off to a good start on assignments and monitoring closely so as to be able to provide feedback or assistance when necessary). More than a third of the teachers also mentioned pressuring perfectionistic students on the issue of timely completion of assignments, but most of these teachers would confine such pressuring to articulation of limits and explanations of the rules for them, couching all of this within a more general emphasis on persuasion, encouragement, and assistance (i.e., not rejection, threat, or punishment). Finally, in addition to describing their reactive strategies for responding to already developed perfectionism problems, many teachers stressed the importance of proactive strategies for preventing the development of such problems in the first place by establishing the classroom as a friendly and supportive learning environment, establishing the expectation that mistakes are a normal and expected part of the learning process, and establishing themselves as helpful instructors concerned primarily with promoting student learning rather than as forbidding authority figures concerned primarily with evaluating student performance.

Relationships Between Interview Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

Several of the most important trends in the correlations between teacher interview response coding categories and the ratings of teacher effectiveness in coping with problem students can be seen in the data on general problem solving strategies shown in Section A of Table 1. These data indicate (a) a negative relationship with effectiveness ratings for teacher responses that were confined to attempts to control or suppress the problem behavior without mention of any of the other general problem solving strategies in addition or instead; (b) no significant relationship for the most popular response of trying

to change the student's attitudes through appeal or persuasion; and (c) positive relationships for offering instruction, training, modeling, or help designed to assist the student in eliminating the problem and for attempting to be supportive by providing encouragement or reassurance, building the student's self-concept, or establishing the classroom as a supportive learning environment.

The same data can be understood in slightly different terms by comparing the higher rated with the lower rated teachers. Except for the 10 teachers who confined their response to control or suppression strategies (who tended to be lower rated teachers), the teachers' responses to perfectionistic students emphasized sympathy, concern, and attempts to be helpful rather than reliance on sanctions to pressure the student for changes in behavior. However, the higher rated teachers generally had longer, richer protocols that mentioned more strategies and included more elaboration concerning implementation of those strategies. In particular, the higher rated teachers were more likely to mention instruction/help or encouragement/support strategies in addition to or instead of attempts to change attitudes through appeal or persuasion. Furthermore, as the Section H data show, these teachers also were more likely to make distinctions between different subtypes of perfectionism calling for somewhat different response strategies, to mention proactive strategies for preventing perfectionism problems from occurring in the first place, and to speak of providing patient and personalized assistance that might extend over a considerable time period to students who did develop such problems. In contrast, the lower rated teachers' responses not only tended to be restricted to attempts to change attitudes through appeal or persuasion, but also tended to imply that these attempts would be confined to only one or just a few brief interactions with the student.

The lack of significant positive relationships for attempts to change attitudes through appeal or persuasion and for all of the socialization strategies in Section C of Table 1 does not indicate that such strategies were counterproductive (there were no significant negative relationships, either), or even necessarily that they are ineffectual. These data do suggest, however, that any positive effects that these persuasion and socialization strategies may have on perfectionistic students are insufficient to accomplish significant improvement--that these students need sustained support and assistance, not just brief doses of well-intentioned advice.

A related set of instructive comparisons occurs among the specific strategies listed in Section B of Table 1: A negative relationship with effectiveness ratings appears for the strategy of attempting to provide encouragement by expressing positive expectations, whereas positive relationships appear for the strategies of building the student's self-concept, providing tutoring or other academic help, seeing that the student gets off to a good start on assignments, and monitoring the student more closely so as to be able to give more frequent feedback or assistance if needed. These data indicate that teachers who provide only verbal and somewhat empty reassurances ("Don't worry, you'll get it, everything will turn out fine in the end") are less likely to be effective with perfectionistic students than teachers who provide these students with academic help (thus making sure that they succeed) or who present them with objective evidence of their praiseworthy progress or accomplishments (thus providing them with good reasons for accepting the teacher's reassurances).

Also related to the trends discussed above are the positive relationships for prescribing (telling, instructing, or eliciting guidelines for improved coping) and proscribing (stating limits, rules, or expectations concerning the avoidance of undesirable behavior). In response to most of the problem student types studied, prescribing and proscribing typically are mentioned by many

teachers but do not correlate significantly with effectiveness ratings. This is because they usually constitute relatively minor elements within much more comprehensive responses to the problem students. Proscription sometimes even correlates negatively, in fact (when it is closely associated with rejecting and punitive reactions to the problem student). The positive relationships for both prescription and proscription in response to perfectionism underscore the finding that perfectionistic students apparently need specific, detailed information and assistance, not just relatively empty reassurances. In addition, the positive relationship for proscription once again illustrates that the vast majority of the teachers assumed a sympathetic and helpful stance rather than a rejecting or punitive stance in response to perfectionistic students, even when cautioning them against undesirable behavior. Thus, in contrast to their treatment of alienated underachievers, which often involved demands for timely work completion backed by threats of punishment for noncompliance, the teachers mentioned work completion expectations and submission deadlines to perfectionistic students as part of attempts to help them succeed by providing structure and assistance (i.e., as friendly reminders rather than as threats).

Besides the cluster of strategies involving provision of academic structuring and assistance to perfectionistic students, another cluster showing positive relationships with effectiveness ratings involves strategies for establishing the classroom as a supportive learning environment. This cluster begins with the teacher's expressed attitude of patience and willingness to work with such students (Variable #63). It also includes proactive strategies designed to establish the right attitudes and expectations and thus prevent perfectionism problems from occurring in the first place (Variable #64), as well as more specific and reactive strategies such as promoting an attitude of acceptance of mistakes and valuing of everyone's contributions (Variable #45) and holding group meetings to combat perfectionism problems by helping the

students to understand that everyone makes mistakes and that such mistakes are normal and useful aspects of the learning process (Variables #26 and #44). Thus, independently of any particular student's neurotic perfectionism problems, the higher rated teachers tended to assume that students in general would be vulnerable to anxiety about their abilities to meet performance expectations and likely to worry about the possible consequences of failure, so they often spoke of the need to establish the classroom as a supportive learning environment and themselves as supportive helpers right from the beginning of the year. These teachers defined acceptable performance in terms of consistent good efforts and steady progress rather than in terms of comparisons with ideal standards or the performance of peers, and they spoke of communicating appreciation for effort and valuing of contributions whether correct or incorrect. To the extent that it proved necessary to do so, they then would supplement these strategies for socializing the class as a whole with group meetings or more individualized treatment designed to counteract neurotic perfectionism, fear of failure, test anxiety, and related problems.

Other responses showing positive relationships with effectiveness ratings include attributing neurotic perfectionism problems to the student's own adoption of unrealistically high standards for performance and mention of willingness to accommodate to the student's needs for perfect papers by marking only correct responses or marking incorrect answers in ways that could be erased easily. These responses may be related not only to each other but to some of the other strategies already discussed in that they indicate that the higher rated teachers were more disposed than the lower rated teachers to take perfectionistic students' high performance standards and related anxieties seriously and to be prepared to deal with them in ways that required considerable sympathy and patience and involved providing intensive and personalized help.

The remaining positive relationship indicates that the 10 teachers who mentioned consulting school-based counselors or social workers for support or assistance in solving the problem tended to be rated higher than the other teachers. Most of these teachers mentioned such consultation as a back-up strategy to be pursued if the teacher's own strategies were not successful. This is compatible with other findings from the larger Classroom Strategy Study indicating that although the higher rated teachers tended to deal with problem students personally rather than attempting to transfer responsibility for coping with the problem to the principal or some other school-based professional, these teachers nevertheless tended to seek advice or assistance from available resource persons when their initial problem-solving efforts were not successful (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988).

Of the variables not already discussed that failed to correlate significantly with effectiveness ratings, most are unremarkable because they are not directly responsive to the problem and thus were not expected to correlate significantly. For example, offering rewards for better performance might be appropriate for students who lacked incentives, but it does not address the perfectionistic student's performance anxiety. Similarly, arranging for positive classroom participation experiences or for opportunities for the perfectionistic student to demonstrate success in public might have some marginal value, but perfectionistic students suffer primarily from their own self-imposed rigid performance standards rather than from overconcern about how classmates view them. Also, kid gloves treatment or attempts to provide comfort or reassurance when the student is upset might be appreciated and might help the student get through stressful situations, but by themselves they do nothing to address the underlying perfectionism problem that produces these stressful situations in the first place.

The only really surprising lack of significant relationships occurred with respect to direct and indirect modeling, and these findings are noteworthy in two respects. First, although modeling is usually a key strategy in the cognitive restructuring treatments that have been developed in recent years by psychologists, the teachers interviewed for this study had not been exposed significantly either to the term "modeling" or to the systematic treatment procedures associated with it. Thus, these teachers seldom were coded for mention of modeling (these interview responses concerning perfectionist students created one of the few data sets within the larger study in which modeling was mentioned often enough to allow for statistical analysis of its relationship to effectiveness ratings). Furthermore, when these teachers were coded for mention of modeling (e.g., demonstration of desirable behavior or coping skills that included verbalization of relevant internal self-talk), they rarely if ever used the term "modeling" or gave an elaborate description of a systematic, step-by- step process. Thus, the fact that 15 teachers were coded for direct modeling and 25 were coded for indirect modeling suggests that there is something about perfectionism symptoms that allows many teachers to develop intuitive recognition of the potential value of modeling as an intervention strategy simply through building up experience in interacting with perfectionistic students. In any case, it is noteworthy that the teachers mentioned modeling as often as they did.

Second, given that modeling would seem to be similar to but more powerful than prescription as a way to teach guidelines for improved coping, and given that prescription correlated positively with effectiveness ratings, it is surprising that modeling (especially direct modeling) did not show significant positive correlations as well. Perhaps the teachers who mentioned modeling were among those who concentrated mostly on trying to change the

perfectionists' beliefs and attitudes without also providing them with academic help designed to ensure that they could achieve success.

Grade-Level and Location Comparisons

Data for the study as a whole (i.e., considering all 12 types of problem students) revealed several consistent grade level and location differences in the teachers' interview and vignette responses, including those concerning perfectionistic students (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988). Teachers in the lower grades more often mentioned behavior shaping and environmental engineering strategies, as well as strategies for providing support, assistance, or counseling to problem students. Teachers in the upper grades were more likely to mention making demands or threatening punishment, as well as trying to change attitudes through logical appeal or persuasion. Small City teachers gave longer and more detailed responses and mentioned more of most types of strategies that called for time-consuming and individualized attention to problem students. In contrast, Big City teachers were more likely to restrict their interventions to strategies designed to control problem behavior on the spot (without including long-term prevention or cure strategies).

Correlational analyses done separately within grade level groups yielded no direct contradictions (e.g., cases where the same coding category showed a significant positive correlation with the principals' effectiveness ratings in the lower grades but a significant negative correlation in the upper grades, or vice versa). However, a few variables yielded correlations of $\pm$ .30 or greater in one of the groups but near-zero correlations in the other group. Specifically, proscribing (limits, rules, expectations) showed a significant positive relationship with the principals' ratings only in the upper grades; de-emphasizing the importance of perfect performance as a method of taking pressure off the student (Category #48 in Table 1) showed a negative relationship

only in the early grades; and positive relationships--but only in the early grades-- were seen for prescribing (tell/instruct/elicit guidelines for improved coping), for the general problem-solving approach of instruction/training/modeling/help, and for mention of proactive strategies intended to prevent perfectionistic behavior from occurring in the first place. There is no obvious age- or stage-related reason for any of these grade-level differences in correlational patterns. Furthermore, the strategy of de-emphasizing perfect performance by stressing learning and improvement over perfection was expected to correlate positively rather than negatively with effectiveness ratings.

There also were no contradictions between the Small City and the Big City correlations, and this time only two variables correlated $\pm$ .30 or more in one location but had a negligible correlation in the other. Deemphasizing perfect performance as a way to take pressure off the student was correlated negatively but only in Big City, and mention of proactive strategies intended to prevent perfectionistic behavior from occurring in the first place was correlated positively but only in Small City. Once again, there are no obvious reasons for these differences. More generally, the grade level and location differences in correlational patterns tend to be limited and relatively unremarkable, suggesting that what constitutes effective teacher response to perfectionism problems is much more similar than different across the grade levels and school locations studied.

In summary, the data from the interviews concerning perfectionism problems indicate that the vast majority of the teachers stated that they would emphasize sympathy and help in response to such problems. Mention of attempts to change the students' beliefs or attitudes through appeal or persuasion was the most common response, but this response did not differentiate the higher rated from the lower rated teachers. Instead, the higher rated teachers were notable for their more frequent mention of proactive preventive measures designed to

establish the classroom as a supportive learning environment and of patient, personalized, and sustained efforts to assist perfectionistic students by providing them with (a) academic monitoring and help to ensure that they could meet performance demands and (b) self-concept support in the form of credible reassurance that they were making acceptable progress and could be expected to continue to do so. The higher rated teachers said that they would also strive to help perfectionistic students learn to set more realistic goals and to cope more effectively with failure, but they mentioned these socialization attempts in addition to rather than instead of attempts to provide academic help and self-concept support.

Responses to Vignette A

Vignette A reads as follows:

> Beth has average ability for school work, but she is so anxious about the quality of her work that she seldom finishes an assignment because of all her "start-overs." This morning you have asked the children to make pictures to decorate the room. The time allocated to art has almost run out and Beth is far from finished with her picture. You ask her about it and find out she has "made mistakes" on the other ones and this is her third attempt at a "good picture."

Data on responses to Vignette A are shown in Table 2.

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The data in Section A indicate that 47 teachers mentioned influence attempts designed to shape Beth's behavior through successive approximations, 37 mentioned attempts to improve her mental hygiene or coping skills, and 30 mentioned attempts to control her behavior through insistent demands. Thus, all three of these general problem solving approaches were well represented in the teachers' responses to Vignette A.

The attributional inferences data (Section B) indicate that heavy majorities of the teachers saw Beth's problem as stable over time (94) and as generalized across situations (89). Furthermore, although most (78) attributed her

behavior solely to causes internal to Beth, less than half (41) saw her as able to control her behavior if she tried to do so and only 12 saw her as misbehaving intentionally. Thus, the teachers tended to see Beth as a victim of her own rigid standards and expectations who was creating a problem without intending to do so. A heavy majority (89) of the teachers saw the problem as caused by factors external to themselves (and usually internal to Beth), yet almost as many were confident that they could improve the situation through their own interventions (84). Smaller majorities believed that these improvements would be stable over time (65) and generalized across situations (51). These are relatively high totals, indicating that the teachers were somewhat more confident about their abilities to intervene successfully with perfectionism problems of the type displayed by Beth than they were with most of the other problems studied in our research (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988).

Neither rewards (Section C) nor punishments (Section D) were mentioned often in the teachers' responses to Vignette A, and no particular type of reward or punishment was mentioned often enough to be included in the table. Besides illustrating that the vast majority of the teachers did not see either reward or punishment as an appropriate technique to use in responding to Beth's problem, these data serve as a reminder that the 47 teachers who were coded for the general problem-solving approach of shaping through successive approximations usually were not using classical behavior modification approaches to shaping that are based on reinforcement of successive approximations of the ultimate goal behavior. Instead, most of these teachers mentioned moving Beth through successive approximations by first providing her with heavy doses of structuring, encouragement, and assistance, and then gradually reducing the frequency and intensity of these personalized interventions as she became more able to cope effectively with failure and work productively on her own.

All but seven of the teachers mentioned at least one supportive behavior (Section E), with the most frequently mentioned forms being instruction (54), encouragement (36), specific behavioral praise (24), comfort or reassurance when Beth was upset (19), and kid gloves treatment to help Beth through difficult periods (19). Only two teachers mentioned threatening or pressuring behaviors (Section F).

Data on commonly mentioned specific strategies for responding to Beth are given in Section G. Most of these involved providing her with some form of support or assistance. The most frequently mentioned strategies were prescribing or modeling better ways of coping with the task (70), attempting to build up her self-concept (40), attempting to develop her insight into the problem (38), proscribing by stating rules, limits, or expectations (20), attempting to identify and eliminate an external source of the problem (20), and brief management responses designed to deal with the incident in only a minimal way and then get Beth back to work quickly (15).

Section H deals with reported methods of dealing with Beth's perfectionism concerns. All but 16 of the teachers mentioned at least one strategy for dealing with her concerns, with the most frequently mentioned strategy being to reject her perception that the pictures were unacceptable and instead to relabel all or part of them as successful or at least as a good start (36). Other strategies included attributing her problems to poor goal setting and planning skills rather than to lack of artistic talent and then helping her to plan by asking questions or making suggestions (24), rejecting her claim that she could not do the task and trying to cajole, demand, or encourage her to do it (24), reassuring her that whatever picture she turned in would be acceptable (22), reassuring her that mistakes are normal and expected (20), attacking her perfectionism by accepting her criticism of her work but labeling her expectations as

too high or rigid (16), and cautioning her not to worry about what peers were doing or to judge her work by comparing it with theirs (6).

Section I concerns the strategies mentioned for getting Beth started again (given that time was running out and she would have to either begin a new picture or salvage one or her earlier efforts). Commonly mentioned strategies for accomplishing this included encouraging Beth to finish or appealing to her using personalized or logical arguments (36), pressuring her to complete the picture by noting time constraints or limited paper supplies (27), helping her to plan how to salvage one of her existing efforts (15), and staying with her to work with her continuously to finish the picture (7).

Section I concerns the strategies mentioned for dealing with the time constraints. Of the teachers who addressed this issue, 39 stated that they would allow Beth to continue to work on the picture after the time limit or to complete it later, 24 stated that they would pressure her to finish quickly, and 12 stated that they would have her turn in whatever she had finished when the time ran out, even if it were not completed.

Section M concerns the rationales offered as justifications for behavior change demands made on Beth. These data indicate that 12 teachers would make no behavioral change demands on Beth and that another 21 teachers would make such demands but offer no rationales or justifications for them. Among those who would offer rationales, 34 would cite school or classroom rules (typically rules limiting the use of paper or requiring that students turn in their work at specified times), 34 would offer logical analysis linking Beth's perfectionism to outcomes that are contrary to her best interests (She doesn't get finished and thus doesn't get credit for completed work), 9 would make personal appeals to Beth (asking her to trust the teacher's judgment or to follow particular guidelines in order to please the teacher), and 6 would appeal to

Beth's pride or positive self-concept (such as by telling her that she is too smart and sensible a girl to persist with such counterproductive behavior).

The data in Section N indicate that only about a third of the teachers mentioned prevention or follow-up strategies. These included structuring tasks for Beth by breaking them into smaller segments or providing more detailed instructions (16), attempting to resocialize her perfectionistic attitudes and expectations (7), and teaching her work organization skills such as goal setting and planning (6). Thus, even though Beth's behavior was described as part of a larger perfectionism syndrome, most of the teachers confined their response to the specific incident depicted in the vignette.

Section O concerns the goals that teachers stated or implied in describing how they would respond to Beth. Twenty-four teachers did not mention any attempt to work on the larger perfectionism problem, so that their goals were confined to the immediate situation depicted in the vignette and were centered around getting Beth to complete the task. Broader goals mentioned or implied by the other teachers included arranging for Beth to experience success frequently or trying to get her to redefine her work as successful by praising it frequently (34), and trying to teach her to set more realistic goals (28), to think and act in terms of completing what she starts (16), to plan her work before beginning and to adjust plans in order to salvage what has been accomplished so far (16), or to set goals in terms of improving her own prior performance rather than through comparisons with peers (7).

Finally, the data in Section Q indicate that only 7 teachers would use themselves as a model in trying to show Beth that everyone makes mistakes or that we learn from our mistakes, 79 would accept or at least not challenge Beth's low opinion of her drawings, and 30 would hang up Beth's picture for display in the classroom.

In summary, a majority of the teachers were confident that they could intervene successfully with Beth, and most would do so using strategies that featured support, encouragement, instructional assistance, and shaping of more efficient task completion rates through successive approximations. These strategies for responding to the incident depicted in Vignette A are highly congruent with the strategies coded for the teachers' interview data described previously.

Relationships Between Vignette A Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

The correlations with effectiveness ratings for the Vignette A coding categories also closely matched the correlations for the interview data. Once again the data indicate that the higher rated teachers generally had longer, richer protocols that mentioned more strategies and gave more elaboration about the strategies that were mentioned, and also that the higher rated teachers called for more intensive and personalized treatment that would extend over a longer time period.

The responses of the lower rated teachers to Vignette A tended to center around getting Beth to complete the picture (often by pressuring her to do so), with little or no attempt to work on the larger perfectionism problem or to deal with her perfectionism concerns at the moment, little or no mention of supportive behavior, and no mention of follow-up strategies. Some of these teachers responded as if this were simply a case of dawdling, and some others treated it primarily as an occasion for restating classroom rules (Students are allowed only one piece of paper for drawing pictures; students are required to turn in their work at the end of the period even if it is not completed). Teachers who gave these kinds of responses appeared to be oblivious or at least insensitive to Beth's perfectionism problem. Other lower rated teachers were sensitive to the problem and did try to address it at least to the extent of

prescribing or modeling better coping strategies and providing some form of encouragement or self-concept support, but their responses usually were less systematic and detailed than those of the higher rated teachers.

In contrast, the higher rated teachers were more likely to address Beth's larger perfectionism problem than to confine their focus to the particular incident depicted in the vignette and to do so with greater confidence of success and a broader range of strategies. The higher rated teachers were less likely to attribute the problem to causes located solely within Beth (i.e., they were more likely to state that demands placed on Beth by her parents or by previous teachers may have contributed to the problem). These teachers also were more likely than lower rated teachers to express confidence in their ability to bring about generalized improvement in the problem through their own interventions.

The higher rated teachers' strategies for responding to Beth focused on instructional input and support and encouragement. Some of the instructional input was focused on the immediate task completion problem and involved sitting down with Beth to work with her or give suggestions about how to salvage one of her existing efforts or to plan a new picture in sufficient detail to allow her to work smoothly through to completion. To the extent that these teachers were concerned about task completion or time constraints, they might place light pressures on Beth by appealing to her sense of pride or positive self-concept or by reminding her that she would have to turn in whatever she had completed when the time period ran out. However, any such pressures were likely to be applied within a larger context of support, encouragement, and reassurance to Beth that both she and her work were acceptable. The teachers in general, and the higher rated teachers in particular, usually did not want to make an issue out of this particular drawing assignment by insisting that Beth turn in an acceptable picture complete and/or on time (many teachers mentioned that they

might do so if this had been an academic assignment instead of an art activity).

Much of the instructional input that the higher rated teachers said they would provide to Beth would be directed not so much at task completion issues as at her perfectionistic attitudes and behavior, either in general or in relation to the task at hand. These teachers would try to develop Beth's insight into the problem by helping her to set more realistic and individualized goals (rather than comparing herself destructively with peers), to realize that everyone makes mistakes, or to recognize that her perfectionism was keeping her from achieving up to her potential. Both in the depicted situation and (in a few cases) during follow-up interactions, the higher rated teachers reported that they would work to resocialize Beth toward more realistic attitudes and beliefs.

The higher rated teachers also were more likely than the lower rated teachers to speak of providing Beth with support and encouragement. During the immediate incident, they would accentuate the positive in their comments to Beth about her efforts so far, pointing out aspects that they liked, reassuring her that one or more of her efforts was salvageable or that a newly planned effort would result in a good picture, reassuring her that she had the ability to create good pictures but was simply going about it in the wrong way (e.g., attributing failure to a remediable problem of reliance on an ineffective strategy rather than to stable limitations in ability), and offering to help. Any of these strategies, but especially several in combination, would be helpful in getting Beth past her frustration and prepared to resume work with a more positive attitude.

The higher rated teachers also were more likely to mention strategies designed to help Beth to experience the success that she craved. In addition to praising her accomplishments and helping her to see the strengths as well as

the weaknesses in her work, the higher rated teachers were more likely to speak of helping Beth to be able to achieve success by structuring tasks more completely for her (breaking them into smaller segments, providing more detailed instructions, etc.). In combination with previously mentioned strategies calling for helping Beth to set more realistic and individualized goals, these strategies would tend not only to help Beth work more efficiently and thus achieve greater objective levels of success, but also to see more of the value in and thus feel more pride and subjective feelings of success for whatever she did manage to accomplish.

Finally, the higher rated teachers were more likely to state that they would hang Beth's picture on the wall for display in the classroom. This would provide opportunities for Beth to get peer recognition for her efforts, and it also would reinforce the teacher's verbal reassurances to Beth that her work is good. However, it is worth noting that several teachers mentioned that this technique can do more harm than good if the student does not want the work displayed or is not proud of it (a problem that is especially likely to occur with perfectionistic students), so that they would first get the student's permission before displaying the work publicly.

As did the interview data, the Vignette A data suggest that teacher support, encouragement, and assistance designed to ensure that the student can both be and feel successful are more crucial to effective response to perfectionism problems than are attempts to change the student's perfectionistic beliefs and attitudes through persuasion and appeal. Apparently it is not enough for students to realize that others, including the teacher, make mistakes and that mistakes can be useful learning experiences. These students need to feel that they can and will be successful, both now and in the future.

Grade-Level and Location Comparisons

There were no contradictory significant relationships in either the grade level or the location analyses, and correlations that reached ± .30 or greater with the principals' ratings in one subgroup but near-zero correlations in the other subgroup appeared only in the grade-level comparisons. Specifically, attributing the problem solely to causes internal to Beth was correlated negatively with the principals' ratings but only in the lower grades; attempting to develop Beth's insight into her problem was correlated positively but only in the early grades; and the follow-up method of structuring tasks more completely for Beth was correlated positively but only in the upper grades. There is no obvious age- or stage-related reason for these grade-level differences in correlational patterns, and in any case they are limited and relatively unremarkable. As did the interview data, the Vignette A data suggest that what constitutes effective teacher response to perfectionism problems is much more similar than different across the grade levels and locations included in this research.

In summary, the Vignette A data parallel the interview data closely in suggesting that (a) the vast majority of the teachers adopted a sympathetic and helpful stance rather than a demanding or threatening stance in responding to the problem; (b) compared to the lower rated teachers, the higher rated teachers gave longer, richer responses that mentioned more strategies and described them in more elaborate detail; (c) compared to the lower rated teachers, the higher rated teachers were more likely to address Beth's general problem of perfectionism and not merely to focus on issues of limited paper supply or looming completion deadlines; and (d) the general pattern of correlations with effectiveness ratings suggests that an effective response to Beth's problem would include not only an attempt to make her realize that everyone makes mistakes and to persuade her not to overreact to such mistakes, but also encouragement in the form of praise for the positive aspects of her work, reassurance that her

work is acceptable and that she has reason to expect success both now and in the future, and assistance in the form of cooperative help or suggestions about how her partially completed current efforts could be salvaged or new efforts could be planned in some detail. Ideally, there also would be follow up designed to ensure that Beth both achieved objective success consistently and learned to appreciate and take pride in her successes subjectively.

Responses to Vignette B

Vignette B reads as follows:

> Chris is a capable student who is exceptionally anxious about making mistakes. He doesn't contribute to class discussions or recitation unless he is absolutely sure he is right. You recognize his anxiety and try to call on him only when you are reasonably sure he can handle it. When you do this today, he blanches and stumbles through an incorrect answer. He is clearly upset.

Data on the responses to Vignette B are also shown in Table 2.

General Trends in the Teachers' Responses

The data in Section A indicate that 63 teachers were coded for mentioning the general problem-solving approach of attempting to improve Chris's mental hygiene or coping skills, 32 for mentioning attempts to shape improved behavior through successive approximations, and only 6 for mentioning attempts to control the problem through demands or threats of punishment. Thus, the teachers viewed Chris in Vignette B as even more of a victim and less of a behavior problem than they viewed Beth in Vignette A.

This is seen even more clearly in the attributional inferences data in Section B. Heavy majorities of the teachers saw Chris's problem as stable over time (92) and generalized across situations (90). Most (73) attributed the problem to causes located within Chris himself, but only 3 saw him as able to control the problem behavior if he tried, and only 2 saw him as misbehaving intentionally.

Even though the vast majority (93) of the teachers saw the problem as caused by factors external to themselves (and usually internal to Chris), most (85) believed that they could intervene effectively and produce improvements that would be both stable over time (82) and generalized across situations (75). These are unusually high totals, indicating that the teachers were more confident about their ability to intervene successfully with perfectionism problems of the type displayed by Chris than they were with most of the other problems studied in our research (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1988).

Only three teachers mentioned rewards, and none mentioned punishments or attempts to threaten or pressure Chris. However, most teachers mentioned one or more strategies for supporting Chris (Section E), including comfort/reassurance (56), kid gloves treatment (44), instruction in better means of coping (37), encouragement (26), specific behavioral praise (11), involving the peers in providing support or assistance (11), and involving the parents in providing support or assistance (6). Thus, the teachers were unanimous in responding to Chris's problem with sympathy, concern, and attempts to be encouraging and supportive.

The data on specific strategies for responding to the problem (Section G) indicate that most (70) of the teachers mentioned some attempt to develop Chris's insight into his problem (typically this was a statement to the effect that he was overreacting to mistakes, usually combined with statements of support and encouragement). Other specific strategies that were coded for more than five teachers included prescribing or modeling better coping strategies (39), attempting to build up Chris's self-concept (33), humor or other tension release comments designed to defuse his embarrassment as depicted in the vignette (20), postponing responding to the problem until a more opportune time, and meanwhile moving on with the lesson (12), proscribing by stating rules, limits, or expectations (12), and minimizing response to the problem by either

confining it to a brief management response (9) or no special response at all (9). The teachers who spoke of minimizing or postponing any attempt to respond to Chris's embarrassment usually did so not because they were unconcerned about the problem but because they believed that trying to deal with it publicly in the middle of the lesson would only make the situation more traumatic for Chris. This was a common perception, in fact; most of the teachers' reported interactions with Chris concerning the depicted incident would occur later on in private conversation--comments made to Chris on the spot usually would be confined to a sentence or two designed to provide brief emotional support and then get him refocused on the lesson.

These same trends can be seen in the data on teachers' reported methods for responding to Chris's mistake (Section K). A majority (54) of the teachers reported that they would simply tell Chris that his answer was not correct and then go on either to give him the answer, to give him another chance to respond, or to invite response from someone else. Other teachers reported that they would be less matter-of-fact and more solicitous of Chris's need for success experiences. These teachers reported such strategies as softening the impact of their negative feedback by telling Chris that his answer was "not quite" or "not exactly" correct (14), responding only to that part of his answer that was correct, assuming that this were possible (9), and rephrasing the question or giving clues in such a way as to virtually ensure a correct answer on the second try.

Section L concerns reported methods for responding to Chris's anxiety or embarrassment in the situation. These data indicate that a majority (55) of the teachers stated that they would show acceptance or reassurance by making it clear to Chris that his input is valued whether right or wrong, that we all make mistakes, and so on. In addition or instead, 39 teachers stated that they would try to get Chris "off the spot" quickly by giving the answer or making a

minimal response and then moving on to someone else, 12 said that they would try to create an immediate success experience by repeating the question or asking a new question, 12 said that they would rely on humor or tension reduction comments to help Chris be able to laugh at his mistake and feel less anxious about it, and 7 said that they would move on quickly for now but get back to him soon with another response opportunity (typically one that they were confident he could handle successfully).

The Section M data indicate that a majority (51) of the teachers would make no behavior change demands on Chris, and that another 26 would make such demands but not offer rationales to justify them (most of these were not so much behavior change demands as suggestions that he learn to stop overreacting to mistakes). Of the teachers who did offer rationales in support of behavior change demands, 15 mentioned logical analyses linking perfectionism to outcomes contrary to Chris's own best interests and 9 mentioned appealing to his sense of pride or positive self-concept.

The Section N data indicate that a majority (54) of the teachers mentioned one or more methods for following up on the depicted incident. These included attempts to resocialize Chris's attitudes and beliefs (35), attempts to make sure that Chris enjoyed frequent success experiences (13), scheduling a conference with his parents (10), and trying to teach him better emotional coping skills (7).

The Section P data indicate that most of the teachers spoke of communicating some form of socialization message to Chris, although 11 teachers stated that they would deliberately avoid speaking to Chris about the problem because they believed that any such discussion would only make it worse (even a private discussion held subsequent to the depicted incident). By far the most common such message, mentioned by 71 of the teachers, was that no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, and so on. Other socialization messages mentioned by more

than 5 teachers included communication of the teachers' recognition that Chris is upset and that this is understandable and acceptable and that he has permission to leave the group until he recovers if he wishes to do so (9), trying to show Chris that he is limiting or hurting himself by needlessly criticizing himself or maintaining overly rigid expectations (8), communicating sympathy for his embarrassment (7), trying to instruct him in emotional coping strategies for use in such situations (7), and trying to convince Chris that he did not really make an error at all (6).

Finally, the Section Q data indicate that 38 teachers mentioned that they would use themselves as a model in trying to show Chris that everyone makes mistakes, that we learn from mistakes, and so on. Most of these teachers stated that they make mistakes (such as misspellings or calculation errors on the board) frequently so that it would be easy to mention one or more of them to Chris, although some teachers stated that they would deliberately make such mistakes in order to position themselves to make this point with perfectionistic students. Also, whereas some teachers would confine their message to the notion that teachers are not perfect so Chris shouldn't feel that he has to be perfect either, others would go on to point out that when they did make mistakes they didn't get upset but merely took corrective action and then moved on with the activity.

In summary, the vast majority of the teachers were confident that they could intervene successfully with Chris, whom they saw as a victim needing sympathy, support, encouragement, and assistance. A few teachers would minimize their response to the depicted incident, both by moving on with the lesson quickly at the time and by avoiding any subsequent discussion of the problem with Chris, because they believed that calling more attention to the problem or trying to discuss it with him would only make it worse. Most teachers, however, would at least take time to communicate to Chris that mistakes are

expected and that he should not overreact to them. Many would also attempt to provide emotional support to Chris either by moving quickly to get him "off the spot," by reassuring him that his input is appreciated whether correct or not, by communicating support and encouragement ("That's okay, you'll get the next one."), or by working to create success experiences for him during or shortly following the depicted incident.

Relationships Between Vignette B Responses and Effectiveness Ratings

The pattern of significant relationships between teacher strategy codes and teacher effectiveness ratings is similar in its implications to, but less extensive than, the patterns observed in the data for the interview and for Vignette A. This is mostly because the responses to Vignette B were concentrated more heavily around a few popular strategies, so that fewer significant differences between the higher rated and the lower rated teachers were observed. Most teachers, regardless of their effectiveness ratings, attributed the problem to similar causes, felt confident in being able to intervene effectively, and emphasized insight-oriented communications (especially the idea that we all make mistakes and should not overreact to them) and communications of support and reassurance, but not pressure or demands for behavioral change, in response to this vignette.

Reflecting the teachers' universal response of sympathy and concern for Chris, there were no significant negative correlations between coding categories and effectiveness ratings. Thus, even the responses of the lower rated teachers tended to be appropriate and probably effective (as far as they went, at least) as strategies for coping with Chris's problem. The lower rated teachers generally suggested the same kinds of strategies as the higher rated teachers did, although typically with less comprehensiveness and elaboration.

Even though a substantial majority (85) of the teachers expressed confidence that they could effect significant improvements in the problem, this confidence variable still showed a significant positive relationship with effectiveness ratings. Thus once again, as we have found repeatedly in analyzing the data from the larger study, teachers' sense of efficacy as professionals capable of intervening successfully with problem students is associated with ratings of their success in doing so.

The other positive correlations with effectiveness ratings mostly parallel the findings from the interview and from Vignette A by indicating that the higher rated teachers not only mentioned trying to get Chris to understand that we all make mistakes and should not overreact to them but also mentioned providing instructional input in the form of modeling or suggestions for better ways of coping with failure situations, mentioned providing emotional support by reassuring Chris that he and his performance are acceptable and that his input is valued whether right or wrong, and mentioned the importance of seeing that Chris achieves success and feels successful (not just that he learns to tolerate mistakes).

Finally, the strategy of involving peers in providing support or help for Chris, mentioned by 11 teachers, was also positively related to effectiveness ratings. As with similar findings concerning peer involvement in the interview data, the peer involvement strategies mentioned by the teachers for helping Chris did not typically involve peers as designated resource persons or change agents. Instead, they tended to involve group activities (either the whole class or small groups composed exclusively of perfectionistic students) centered around discussion of emotional responses to mistakes and methods of coping with failure effectively.

Grade-Level and Location Comparisons

There were no contradictory significant findings in the grade-level or location comparisons, but a few variables correlated ± .30 or more in one subgroup but at near-zero levels in the other subgroup. In the grade-level comparisons, stated expectations that improvements brought about by teacher intervention would be stable over time correlated positively with effectiveness ratings but only in the upper grades. The location comparisons revealed six correlations with the principals' ratings that exceeded .30 in the Big City subsample but were near-zero in the Small City subsample. These included positive relationships for teacher expression of confidence in being able to effect significant improvement in the problem, prescribing or modeling better coping strategies, humor or tension reduction comments to relieve Chris's anxiety or embarrassment in the depicted incident, and failure to mention follow-up strategies, as well as negative relationships for failure to mention strategies designed to increase Chris's insight into his problem and failure to make behavioral change demands on Chris. These relationships are unremarkable (except for the positive correlation for failure to mention follow-up strategies, which was expected to correlate negatively with outcome ratings). In any case, the grade- level difference does not appear to be related to age- or stage-related differences in children, and the location differences appear to reflect differences in the base rate frequencies of mention of the various strategies rather than differences in the needs of perfectionistic students attending the Big City versus the Small City schools. As with the interview and Vignette A data, the Vignette B data suggest that what is effective with perfectionism problems is much more similar than different across the grade levels and locations studied.

In summary, the Vignette B findings are similar to those for the interview and for Vignette A in what they imply about effective coping with perfectionism

problems, although there are fewer significant relationships and less extreme contrasts between the higher rated and the lower rated teachers. All of the teachers stated that they would respond to Chris's problem with sympathy and a desire to be supportive and helpful, and a heavy majority stated that they would try to minimize or ameliorate his anxiety or embarrassment in the situation and would at least try to communicate the notion that everyone makes mistakes and we should not overreact to them. In addition to endorsing these popular response strategies, the higher rated teachers were more likely than the lower rated teachers to also mention providing Chris with informational input in the form of modeling or suggestions about more effective coping strategies, communicating their acceptance of him and his contributions, and working to make sure that he would enjoy a success experience during or shortly after the depicted incident.

Comparison of Findings From the Two Vignettes

Even though they addressed somewhat different aspects of perfectionism, the two vignettes produced teacher response tendencies and patterns of correlation with effectiveness ratings that were similar both to each other and to the patterns produced by the interview. Still, within this overall similarity in teacher stance toward perfectionistic students and in patterns of correlation between teacher response categories and effectiveness ratings, there were several interesting nuances of difference and a few substantial differences between the two vignettes. These occurred mostly because Chris in Vignette B was portrayed as visibly upset and nothing in his behavior could be seen as objectionable whereas Beth in Vignette A was portrayed more as frustrated than upset and as engaging in behavior that would leave her open to criticism by some teachers (using too much paper, failing to create a finished product within the time allotted). Also, Chris's traumatic experience occurred during a

public lesson (where the presence of onlookers increased the potential for embarrassment to Chris and where the teacher's options were limited by the need to get on with the lesson), whereas Beth's problem occurred during an individualized art activity (so that the teacher could interact with her privately and could take more time to deal with the problem on the spot).

Some of the most striking differences in teachers' responses to these two vignettes are in the attributional inferences data. The teachers saw the two problems as similarly stable, generalized, and caused by factors internal to the students themselves, but 41 teachers saw Beth as able to control the problem behavior if she chose to do so whereas only 3 believed that Chris had such controllability, and 12 implied that Beth might be misbehaving intentionally whereas only 2 implied this about Chris. Furthermore, although the teachers were similarly (and highly) confident that they could effect significant improvements through their own interventions with both students, they were significantly more confident that these improvements would be stable over time and generalized across situations in the case of Chris than in the case of Beth.

The teachers similarly emphasized supportive behavior and not rewards, punishments, or threatening or pressuring behavior in responding to each vignette, but the patterns of support mentioned were different. There was relatively more emphasis on praise and encouragement in the responses to Beth, but relatively more emphasis on comfort, reassurance, and kid gloves treatment in the responses to Chris. These differences reflect the fact that Beth's problem was primarily behavioral (at least in its overt manifestations) and thus called for techniques designed to change behavior, whereas Chris's problem was primarily emotional and thus called for provision of emotional support.

Similar contrasts are seen in the general problem-solving approaches. Shaping through successive approximations was the most popular approach taken with Beth, and 30 teachers were coded for attempts to control through demands

or threat of punishment. In contrast, two-thirds of the teachers emphasized improvement of mental hygiene or coping skills with Chris, and only 6 teachers emphasized control through demands. The various specific strategies show similar differences, with primary emphasis on getting Beth to work more efficiently and complete what she starts (and only secondary emphasis on emotional support), but primary emphasis on emotional support, reassurance, and mental hygiene for Chris (along with suggestions that he not take mistakes so seriously, but not demands for behavior change).

Finally, 38 teachers mentioned using themselves as models in showing Chris that everyone makes mistakes, whereas only 7 teachers mentioned this as part of their response to Beth. This was part of a larger contrast in which a heavy majority of the teachers would try to show Chris that he was overreacting to mistakes and putting too much pressure on himself, whereas only a minority of teachers would take up this point with Beth. Both students were described as having this problem in the vignettes, but many more of the teachers focused on it because Chris was depicted as suffering anguish and embarrassment at the immediate moment and because there were fewer competing problems to attract their attention (Beth's consumption of limited paper supplies and failure to complete her work).

Qualitative Impressions and Examples

Rereading and reflection upon the teachers' interview and vignette responses has suggested several qualitative impressions that supplement the information contained in the tables. It has also led us to identify instructive examples of strategies heretofore discussed only in more general terms, as well as ideas or strategies mentioned by only one or two teachers that seemed worth including in this report (even though they did not occur often enough to allow statistical analyses of their relationships to effectiveness ratings).

General Impressions

The typical response to our general strategies interview concerning perfectionistic students was expression of concern about the problem coupled with descriptions of sympathetic attempts to help. Also frequent were statements that the problem was common and familiar (although perhaps not in the extreme forms depicted in the vignettes), predictions that progress would have to occur slowly over a significant time period, and statements that these students are difficult or uncomfortable to work with because they are so tense and anxious. Many teachers tempered their concern about perfectionistic students by noting that some aspects of perfectionism are desirable and should be reinforced even while one attempts to change the undesirable aspects. Many also mentioned that they are or were perfectionistic themselves. Diverging from this typical (tempered) response, several teachers saw little or no problem at all in perfectionism, whereas at the other extreme one teacher viewed it as a dangerous condition that predisposed the victim to potential suicide in adolescence.

Almost all teachers expressed concerns about Chris's emotional trauma in Vignette B, but many expressed much less concern about Beth's behavior in Vignette A. In particular, many Big City teachers viewed Beth mostly as a student with high standards who wanted to work at her own pace and not only saw no problem with this but would facilitate it by telling her that she could finish her work at home and turn it in the next day. Several of these Big City teachers said that they welcomed perfectionism (short of the extremes depicted in the vignettes), would like to see more of it in their students, or were unhappy that they were not seeing as much of it as they had seen in earlier years. Several teachers initially confused perfectionistic students with other problem student types who display some of the same symptoms (slow learners, slow workers who are poorly organized, students who are generally anxious in school but not especially perfectionistic, or students who are trying to minimize the

amount of work that they will be required to turn in). This suggests that these teachers might fail to diagnose perfectionism problems that might underlie symptomatic behavior in their classrooms, even though they recognized perfectionism as a familiar and understandable problem when it was clarified for them by the interviewer.

Several teachers made interesting observations about subtypes of perfectionists. One noted that the problem as it occurs in the early grades often is caused by incorrect perceptions of the teacher's standards and expectations, whereas in the later grades it is more likely to reflect the students' own dissatisfaction with failure to meet their own standards and expectations. The former problem is relatively easy to reduce (through teacher clarification and support). This same teacher believed that perfectionism problems like Beth's are seen more often in girls than boys and are especially likely to occur with respect to penmanship. Finally, this teacher claimed that perfectionism problems do not occur as often in individualized programs because all of the students work at a challenging level (for them individually) so that they become accustomed to making mistakes, whereas under the traditional system the "A" students often are able to enjoy relatively continuous easy success so that they are prone to becoming upset when they do encounter difficulties.

Several teachers stated that perfectionistic students often come from homes in which the parents place overly intense or rigid pressures on them for school achievement. One teacher stated the belief that rather than coming from homes in which the parents are high-achieving perfectionists themselves, some of these students come from homes in which the parents have very little education but are determined to push their children to do better than they did "until the child doesn't have time to breathe and doesn't feel comfortable with himself."

In talking about how they would deal with Beth in Vignette A, several teachers said that they would make a point of retrieving a paper that Beth had balled up and thrown in the wastebasket, smoothing it out again, and then showing her how her rejected effort could be salvaged (turned into a good picture). In this connection, several teachers mentioned that limited paper supplies required them to limit each child to one piece of paper for art work, so that students who were dissatisfied with their efforts could turn over the paper and use the other side but could not get more paper. Several teachers also mentioned using the clock to pace Beth ("When the big hand gets to the 3, you will have to turn it in").

Other strategies mentioned for coping with slow progress due to erasures and "startovers" included (a) compromising with such students by telling them that they will be "allowed" a specified number of lines that contain erasures, but will be required to turn in the other lines without erasures, for example, crossing out incorrect material rather than erasing it; (b) changing the task to something easier or less frustrating for the child, such as switching from painting to work with clay, which one teacher described as "not quite as 'perfect' as paint"; (c) trying to talk the student into crossing out rather than erasing because erasing only makes the paper look worse and will eventually tear holes in it; (d) suggesting that the child sketch the intended drawing on scrap paper before attempting a final version--similarly, encouraging students to get their composition ideas down in first drafts written on scrap paper, without concerning themselves much about spelling or appearance; (e) letting such students use the teacher's big art gum eraser when they are frustrated about mistakes, because the novel "privilege" will help distract them from their frustration; (f) where the problem is as much due to failure to think ahead as to perfectionism, giving the child one of those humorous "think ahead" signs in which the final "d" had to be crowded in because not enough space had

been left for it; (g) explaining to such students that they cause themselves to miss out on other important activities by taking so long to finish seatwork assignments or having to work on them later; (h) showing the child mistakes made in a book or newspaper to help underscore the message that everyone makes mistakes; and (i) making a game or challenge out of trying to avoid erasing things by creatively hiding mistakes by incorporating them into the picture.

Many of the noteworthy teacher comments made in response to Vignette B concern strategies for minimizing the emotional trauma depicted in the incident. Some teachers would try to create a success experience for Chris as soon as possible after the incident, such as by asking him to read a correct answer off of his paper (if feasible) or coming around to him later to comment positively on his work or to ask him a question that he almost certainly could answer. Many teachers would try to avoid telling Chris directly that he was wrong. As one put it, "I'd wiggle that answer around someplace so that it could be sort of right--explain to the group how this could have been a right answer, so he feels comfortable about it. You can do that quite often." Such teachers would also use such techniques as (a) merely thanking Chris for his information and then going on to someone else without giving feedback as to its correctness; (b) appearing to accept the answer but then asking someone else "What is another aspect of that?" (c) saying "That's one answer, but can you think of another one that might be a little better?" (d) simply saying "I'll get back to you later" and then going on to someone else; and (e) moving on quickly at the time but then coming back to Chris later and saying "I knew that you had the answer to that question but you just couldn't think of it at the time." One teacher described attempting to minimize such problems by training the students to say "I don't know" when they don't know an answer, making it clear to them that this is perfectly acceptable behavior under the circumstances (and preferable to making a wild guess). Finally, one teacher mentioned the possibility

that one or more peers might be making fun of Chris when he makes mistakes (so that one should be alert to this and prepared to intervene if necessary).

Several teachers mentioned methods of responding to perfectionistic students' needs for a feeling of success. One would make a point of putting a happy face or sticker on their papers more or less regardless of how many answers were correct, so that these students would know that their work was acceptable even if not always perfect. Another teacher who would encourage these students to cross out mistakes and move on with their work would later put smiley faces next to the responses that looked best or would ask the student to decide which looked best and then mark accordingly. Similarly, a teacher who talked about using contract systems with perfectionists added that when the work was assessed, stipulation that the contract had been fulfilled would require not only that the teacher put a star on the paper but also that the student put a star on it to signal his or her acceptance of it.

The following strategies calling for involvement of peers or work with groups were mentioned: (a) teaching these students in smaller groups as much as possible so that they feel less pressured when stuck for answers; (b) group sharing activities in which the students would be encouraged to talk about occasions in which they made big mistakes in public--the teacher would describe such experiences, too; (c) having perfectionists work with peer partners so that they will get immersed in the activity and be less likely to obsess about their actual or potential failures, although another teacher noted that having slow workers work with a partner helps them to become aware that they are falling behind if they work too slowly; (d) reading and discussion of the book I'm not perfect; (e) singing and discussion of the song "Free to be you and me"; (f) sending perfectionists to tutor younger students; and (g) leading a class discussion on mistakes in which participants would take turns telling about the biggest mistakes they ever made, so that everyone could laugh about them.

Other preventive or follow-up strategies mentioned included (a) saving work done early in the year to show students later or following a difficult assignment with an easy one that would have been difficult early in the year, to provide basis for showing students how they have progressed and now can do with ease what they were frustrated with several months ago; (b) deliberately asking perfectionists relatively easy questions, or giving them enough clues to make the questions easy, in order to create consistent success experiences--however, some teachers objected to this strategy as it was portrayed in Vignette B, stating that they would ask Chris the same kinds of questions that they would ask anyone else and would concentrate more on getting him to learn to accept mistakes than on artificially creating success experiences for him; (c) scheduling speed drills or exposing students to tasks that they have not been fully prepared for, so as to create situations where perfectionists cannot possibly get perfect scores and yet the teacher can praise them for doing x% correctly, which would be defined as grade A performance; (d) talking about how Christopher Columbus set out to find spices and jewels for the queen as a way to make the point that one must make the best of one's mistakes; and (e) taking every opportunity to call on perfectionists to respond to opinion questions or other questions for which there are no clear-cut right or wrong answers.

Several teachers mentioned attempts to use humor, both as a way to make a point and as a way to put perfectionists at ease. One said that if she thought the student would respond positively to it, she would say "I want you to turn in this paper with at least two mistakes on it--you decide which two mistakes you want to make." Another suggested responding to Chris by saying, "Well, that's your goof for today--you don't get any more of those!" If a mistake had provoked laughter because it was funny, another teacher would encourage the victim to laugh at it too ("Come on, laugh with us"). Finally, another teacher suggested humorous role play for overly anxious and dependent students.

Specifically, she would switch roles with the student by working on an assignment but frequently interrupting to come and ask "Is this all right? . . . Is this good? . . . etc."

Finally, teachers mentioned the following sayings for use with perfectionists: (a) Making mistakes is part of being human, so if you don't make mistakes, you are not human; (b) The only way to avoid not doing anything wrong is to not do anything at all; (c) We all make mistakes--that's why they put erasers on pencils; (d) It's okay to make mistakes--just don't make the same ones over and over again; (e) If we were all perfect we wouldn't have anything to strive for; and (f) Don't reach for Mars until you have reached the moon.

Most of these unique suggestions seem insightful and likely to be helpful, although a few could be counterproductive (e.g., leading the student to believe that a wrong answer is correct) and several (e.g., role switching, attempts at humor) would have to be implemented carefully and with only certain students.

General Discussion

Most of the teachers were familiar with perfectionism problems, confident that they could achieve significant improvement in such problems through their own interventions (especially the higher rated teachers) although such improvement might occur only slowly over a long time frame, and oriented toward sympathetic responses featuring support, encouragement, assistance, and attempts at cognitive restructuring. This tendency toward overall similarity in the teachers' responses to perfectionism problems produced data sets in which almost all of the significant correlations between teachers' reported strategies and our effectiveness ratings were positive and in which the differences between the lower rated and the higher rated teachers were not so much in the nature of the strategies suggested but in the variety of (similar) strategies mentioned and the degree of elaboration with which implementation of the strategies was

described. (See appendix for selected excerpts from transcripts.) Similarly, although the teachers working in the early grades and in Small City tended to give longer responses and to make more mention of strategies calling for intensive or personalized interaction with the problem student, grade level and location differences in patterns of correlation between teachers' reported strategies and principals' effectiveness ratings were few, unpatterned, and unremarkable, suggesting that what constitutes effective response to perfectionism problems is much more similar than different across the grade levels and locations studied.

The teachers intuitively recognized that the most fundamental aspects of perfectionism problems are the student's subjective cognitive and emotional reactions to failure cues, not their overt behavioral symptoms. Consequently, their reported strategies stressed attempts at cognitive restructuring and provision of support and assistance rather than attempts at behavior modification featuring offers of reward or threats of punishment. Although none of the teachers had had training in reality therapy, cognitive behavior modification, or other systematic approaches to cognitive restructuring with perfectionistic students, most of the socialization and modeling strategies that they mentioned involved pursuing similar goals with similar methods. To the extent that such socialization and modeling efforts involve something more systematic and extensive than a brief "we all make mistakes, don't worry about it" statement, they should help alleviate the problem by moving the student toward more realistic goal setting, more balanced and differentiated performance assessment, and greater tendency to respond to mistakes with diagnostic thinking and coping strategies rather than catastrophic emotional reactions. Nevertheless, the data suggest that cognitive structuring/socialization/persuasion strategies, even if well implemented, would constitute only part of an optimal response to

perfectionism problems as they occur in classrooms. Teacher support, encouragement, and assistance appear to be crucial elements as well.

These additional treatment elements highlighted in the current findings that tend not to be featured in programs developed by therapists for use with perfectionistic adults reflect the fact that, in addition to acting as therapists seeking to help clients to become happier and learn to cope more effectively, teachers working with perfectionistic students function within the roles of instructor who helps to equip the students with what they need to succeed at classroom tasks and authority figure who evaluates the degree to which they achieve such success. Rather than being confined to the role of outside coach or resource person, the teacher can work with the problem directly by interacting with perfectionistic students to help them to shape their thinking as they set goals and expectations prior to tasks, cope with the events that occur as they work on the task, and evaluate their performance both as it unfolds and after it has been completed. Our data suggest that the teachers who respond most effectively to classroom perfectionism problems capitalize on the opportunities that their instructor and authority figure roles provide to them by not only seeking to establish more realistic goal setting and more effective coping with failure experiences, but also by providing perfectionistic students with whatever support and assistance they may need in order to achieve success and by reassuring them that they are progressing acceptably and doing what is expected of them despite errors or imperfections in their work.

The data also suggest that the most effective teachers honor the subjective experience of perfectionistic students by taking them seriously and trying to meet their needs (halfway, at least). First, such teachers do not take lightly or attempt to brush off the students' catastrophic emotional reactions. Rather than blithely telling them to relax and not worry about mistakes, they communicate understanding and approval of the students' desire to

do well and sympathy with the students' feelings of embarrassment or frustration during or after situations in which they have become upset. Second, they honor the students' achievement motivation. Rather than just talk in terms of lowering goals and being satisfied with less-than-perfect performance, these teachers also reassure perfectionistic students that they will get whatever help they need to achieve success, follow through by providing this help, and communicate their approval of the students' progress and accomplishments. Thus, in addition to attacking unrealistic expectations, they take steps to maximize not only these students' objective levels of achievement but also their subjective appreciation of their attainments. In this way, they support and reinforce the success-seeking aspects of achievement motivation even while working to reduce unrealistic goal setting, either-or thinking in evaluating success or failure, catastrophic emotional response to mistakes, and the other symptoms associated with neurotic forms of perfectionism.

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Appendix

Selected Excerpts From Transcripts

This appendix contains excerpts from the raw data (e.g., the transcripts of the teachers' interview and vignette responses), selected to show representative examples of apparently more effective and apparently less effective responses. As noted previously, the vast majority of the teachers responded to perfectionism problems sympathetically, reporting some combination of persuasion, support, reassurance, and assistance to the student. Consequently, although a few of the apparently less effective responses feature strategies that appear irrelevant or unresponsive to the problem, most feature the same kinds of strategies featured in the more effective responses (but fewer of them and with less elaboration about how they would be implemented).

I. Interview Responses

A. A More Effective Example

My general philosophy is to make them more accepting of the fact that they're fallible. They're so afraid about making mistakes, so afraid of criticism for not doing what they think they are expected to do. I can relate to this because I'm like this myself, and I really have to work at it. I would start on a one-to-one basis, just talking to them about the fact that we all make mistakes, and that rather than getting upset about it, we should look at it as a learning experience. What have I learned from this? How can I profit from it and go on? I can imagine this child having headaches or upset stomachs a lot, and counseling might be in order just to help them be more accepting of the way they are. I would probably also talk to the parents, and as tactfully as possible, ask them how they handle it when their child makes a mistake. Perhaps they're helping wash the dishes and they break a dish. How does the parent deal with this, because I think it all comes back to how the parents have dealt with the child making errors, or perhaps how their first new teachers dealt with errors. Another thing that I have done is have the class just talk about times when they've made mistakes, when things haven't turned out quite right, and how they felt about it and how they handled it. That frequently helps other children to know that they're not alone, that they're all in the same boat, that we're not perfect. . . . Also, I help them to differentiate between mistakes that are made when you're trying real hard and thoughtless kinds of mistakes, that if you're putting forth your best effort, it's ok if you're still having difficulty; just ask for some help.

B. A More Effective Example

I would level with the child. I would talk to them privately and set down what I felt was the problem, that they were too much of a perfectionist. Perhaps they were overstepping their goals at this point and making themselves miserable. I would try to reassure them that it wasn't as bad as it seems, try to ease the pressure. I am assuming here that there is pressure on this child from somewhere else, because I would not be exerting this type of pressure to cause them to be so overanxious. . . . My goal would be to help them enjoy school and not to be so fearful. Humor could help here. We have to get them to loosen up. After I had leveled with them and explained to them that this is how I see the situation and I am the one right now you have got to deal with because I am going to decide if you are doing well or not. So you have to come around a little bit to my thinking. Be more realistic. I would just lay the facts on them, because I see this group as having the ability to do the work

and the reason they are frustrated is more emotional than academic. Then after I had talked to them, I would make a special effort to supply verbal praise and support, personal affection and one-to-one. They need more of it because often the pressure from home is not supportive. It is like, "I got an 'A'." "Well, how come you didn't get an 'A+'?" You are never good enough. Feeling inadequate and inferior is what is affecting them. They don't even know how to accept praise when they get it, so they are hard to crack through. You have to get them to see their own self-worth. I would begin building up their self-concept. I might even do a unit on self-concept. We have a VIP board and every week there is a different VIP (very important person) and we rotate having the people up. Often times when I find a child that has a particular need like this I'll make it a class project, without singling them out. The kids won't know that this one kid has this problem, but if you address it to the whole group the other kids enjoy the lesson and it ends up doing something for that child as well as being fun for the rest of them. . . . As they begin to feel more comfortable, at ease with you and the school environment, the pressure begins to lessen and they begin to come out. They lose this fearfulness and anxiety. They may get it when they go home and they may have it when they come in in the morning, but you can see them mellow. When they get here in the morning, we loosen up and joke around a little bit, "Hey what's happening?" then they get into the program and forget about their troubles outside. That's what it is all about. That six hours you have to try to make up for a lot of things. This type of problem is often a long range plan for me. I rarely am able to treat it in a short period of time.

C. A More Effective Example

Sometimes there doesn't seem to be any reason for why children are like this. They just seem to feel that people expect them to do the very best and they won't accept anything less from themselves. Other times children have high demands from parents that perhaps are very unrealistic and expect them to make all As when the children may not be able to do that. One strategy is having a total class discussion--give the children an opportunity to share experiences of times that they made a really big goof or they wanted to do something the right way and they weren't able to, and then when the children were finished I would give a brief example of something that had happened to me. They also need to know that I make mistakes and that I am still living, that I can cope with that. Such a sharing experience may help perfectionists to realize that they are not the only ones who make mistakes, and that may help them to accept themselves when the mistakes are made. Day to day, they need a lot of reassurance that a mistake is okay, they can erase, they don't have to throw a paper away. That you are hoping they will be able to complete their work, that the most important thing is to have it done accurately and completely, not neatness. Or, if they are simply afraid to do it because they are afraid they are going to get the wrong answer all the time, I would sit with them and work through some and have them work them in front of me. Reassure them that yes, they are doing them correctly and they can continue on their own. Perhaps I would have them check back with me at the end of a row of math problems to get more reassurance that they are still on the right track. If a child is a true perfectionist, I think it is a very long time before they really cope with making mistakes and are really able to accept themselves. What won't work with these children is insisting that they get it done no matter what, that you don't care whether they make mistakes or not. Because they care, and they need to know that you know they feel it is important that they get things right. It

is just that you know it is okay to make mistakes, that is different than you not caring about your mistakes.

D. A Less Effective Example

I'm not sure what causes these children to be this way. Maybe as parents we put pressures upon them that we don't realize. So possibly it's the parents who give the pressure to start with. The way I try to work with these children is--praise his work--make him feel secure that what he's doing is fine--that he's doing a great job. Usually these children have to compare themselves, and they compare themselves to the teacher's work or the adult's work, so I try to have him, if he has to compare, compare himself to his own peers. Just by simply taking his paper--if he feels his paper isn't any good--take it over to his table and say, "This looks just as good as anybody else's, so you're doing just what you're supposed to be doing at your age." You can't say to this child, "Hey it's all right. Go sit down, you're doing okay." He still needs that attention, and praise so he knows he is doing all right.

E. A Less Effective Example

These children are overly anxious about making mistakes, so the first thing we have to do is try and get them so they will do their work, do some work, and be satisfied with it. Often they'll start, then they will want to tear that paper up and start over. Sometimes you have to just let them do that, but then if they're still unhappy with what they've done, just tell them that it's okay, they are supposed to make some mistakes. They are not supposed to get everything right. . . .Lots of times we as teachers make mistakes, so we point that out. "I made a mistake." We just are not all made perfect. I don't expect their papers to always have to be just perfect. Or their work. Maybe laugh about it. Don't take everything so seriously. . . other things, give them a lot of positive reinforcement, that he is doing a good job. Look at his paper and point out the good things about it. Possibly a good picture or maybe the way he is making his letters. I would start with that. I would do that.

F. A Less Effective Example

They are fearful of making mistakes and should be told not to be afraid of making mistakes, that everybody makes mistakes and this is how we learn. "I make mistakes, the principal makes mistakes," it's very positive and you should at least try and not be afraid of making a mistake. If you do make a mistake, fine. This is the way you are going to learn." Sometimes you have to be a little bit firm and say "You have to do it." But keep telling them not to be afraid of making mistakes.

G. A Less Effective Example

He is so afraid that if he's wrong, he'd be laughed at or put down, so he's going to have to gain confidence. I think the best way for this to be done is through his class members. They're gonna have to show him that he can make a mistake and we won't laugh. He has to be shown that others also make

mistakes in class and no one laughs. Also, the teacher does not have to say that "It's wrong." She can say, "Okay, let's get another idea, let's see what else we can get from that if anyone else has an idea."

H. A Less Effective Example

I simply tell them, if I see that they're starting over and over again, they cannot have any more paper. That it's a waste. That they have to sit down and they have so many minutes to finish. I would simply say, "It's a fine picture, you've got so much time to finish it, you better hurry up and get it done." Most of the kids will accept that. And if they're not finished, sometimes they can take the paper home and finish it. If I really feel that they are concerned about the quality of their work, then they can take it home and do it.

II. Responses to Vignette A

A. A More Effective Example

I would get her old papers out that had one little mistake and was thrown away, and I would say "See all the good space on this paper that has been ruined because you have made one little mistake." I would show her how to take the pencil or crayon and show her how if she would use a little imagination and her ability she could take that mistake and include it in the picture or go over it and not be so wasteful. She is just anxious and speeding through it and doesn't want to take the time. So I would show her how to correct it and I would say, "Look, this is it. You have already had more sheets than you were supposed to have. I am going to let you finish this one because you have already begun and I don't want this one wasted too. But, no more. I would hang up what she did do and I would say, "Now see, that's good. I would also try to say, "In fact, I think this one would have been neat too. I wish you would have finished this one," if it had any worth at all. . . . I might suggest that in the future she take a scratch paper and do a sample of what she was going to do first. Rather than using the good sheets first and ruining them. Perhaps say, she should look in a book for ideas rather than just starting out without a real idea in mind. Or I might say, "Look, it's just not your day to do art" and I would have her do something else. Maybe she could do a job for me or read in the quiet corner. Maybe she isn't feeling like doing a poster and that is why she was flustered. I don't think this is the kind of assignment that should be mandatory.

B. A More Effective Example

Beth, let's take a look at these other pictures that you started. Tell me what you think didn't go right. I would wait for her to give me an explanation and I would say "Beth, whenever people make things or do things, nobody is perfect and we all make mistakes. Every time you do something you'll get a little bit better, but you have to try and take something and complete it because just the act of doing it, just trying to do it will make the next time you do it a little easier." I would probably give her an example of something where I had made a mistake but had then gone ahead--help her to know that other people feel the same way when they make things that don't come out just right

but you accept it as a learning experience. That you are being unfair to yourself if you always want things to be perfect. I would tell Beth that her attempts have been fine, that it's okay if your picture doesn't come out exactly how you expected it to and that you have to accept that, that is the way it is. When you go through life it's partly the mistakes in the doing that help you learn to become more capable. . . . My goal would be to help her accept the fact it is okay to make a mistake. Things don't have to be perfect. To be more accepting of what she is able to do. Maybe the person next to her is really artistic but she should understand that she is Beth and this is what Beth can do and you shouldn't expect to do exactly what the other person can do.

C. A Less Effective Example

"Beth, why aren't you finished with your picture yet? Art time is almost over. You started over two times. Where are your other ones? What's wrong with this one? I think it's really pretty. It has a really pretty flower on it. Why can't a flower be purple? It can be any color you want it to be. I have seen a lot of purple flowers. Why don't we use this one? You won't have time to finish that last one." My goal is to get her not to be perfect, and to know that when she does it the best that she can the first time, I'll accept it. If she has time she may do it over. She is a student who seldom finishes her work.

D. A Less Effective Example

We talk a lot about conservation of our materials and we have a quota of how many times you can start over, so she would know automatically that she wasn't supposed to start over that many times without permission. They can get permission, but at least it makes them stop and think before they start over again. . . . I might suggest she start over on the back, then just say to her that we have to be through at such and such a time and that will have to be your finished product. Sometimes you have to put limits on children or they'll never stop.

E. A Less Effective Example

I would notice when the picture was looking pretty good and I would say "Beth, let's save this and finish it tomorrow. Time is up today, but you will have time tomorrow to finish it." The goal would be to have a good picture to hang up in the room and that she would be proud of it. She probably could do very good work, be a good student. She just needs encouragement to not waste so much time starting over.

III. Responses to Vignette B

A. A More Effective Example

I would try to take away a little of the seriousness of the situation and if he could handle it, I might say, "Nobody is perfect" or "We can't be right all the time. You're human and you're allowed to have one mistake today. That was it now, no more." Sometimes he would respond to that. If not and he just

kept getting very upset like certain people do, I would ignore him and go on to somebody else, but while I was having someone else recite I might go over and very quietly whisper in his ear "Knock it off right now. There isn't a need for this. You're okay so let's go on." Then I would see him after school in regard to that and we would review what had happened and how he could have handled it differently without exploding and causing more of a problem by making a spectacle of himself. A lot of times when you make a mistake you act confident and go on and people aren't going to notice and make a big deal out of it. But when you draw attention to it, you look more foolish. Try to get him to understand that. My goal would be for him to have more self-control when he does not succeed on something. Not fall apart over it like it was the end of the world and have him approach it more maturely. To succeed and fail but maturely and realize it's normal and natural, that he can't set his expectations for 100% perfection because no one can attain it all the time. Help him to be more realistic about his goals for himself. Help him to see that he doesn't want to make a spectacle because that only makes him feel worse in the long run.

B. A More Effective Example

I guess I would say "Chris had a little bit of trouble with the answer. Is there anybody who can help him out? Let's see what the right answer is." First of all he is upset because he doesn't want to be not right in front of the other children and so I wouldn't make too much of a big deal of it. I would say "Is there anybody that can help out with this answer or perhaps give us a better answer." I would try to talk to Chris as soon after that lesson as possible to help him understand that it's okay to make mistakes, that every time you open your mouth you don't have to be right, that I make mistakes. I probably would give a case in point where I have made a mistake. Something else I have tried, and it's worked reasonably well, is to say, "Class, was it okay that Chris made a mistake?" Most of the time the kids will say "yes" and then I might add, "Can somebody give me an example of a time that they made a mistake?" I have used that technique and found that it has worked several times. So there are two possible ways I would handle it. One would be to just quickly ask if there is somebody who can answer the question and talk to Chris afterwards. The other would be to help him realize that mistakes are okay, that everybody makes mistakes, and that his class will accept the fact that he makes mistakes. That we are all here learning and in the process of learning you make mistakes and you learn by them. You just keep going on.

C. A Less Effective Example

If I see that Chris is already upset, then I definitely wouldn't call on Chris that day. I'd just let him by. Maybe that afternoon I could pick up and ask him questions. Maybe time will cure whatever the problem is. If he's clearly upset, then I definitely wouldn't call on him because it would make bad matters worse. Later I could try to encourage him to not try to be so perfect. "We all make mistakes, I made a couple myself, which is not the worst thing in the world, I'm not perfect you know." This type of thing. Maybe he will ease up and be willing to try and not be so anxious about this.

D. A Less Effective Example

I would simply tell him that everyone makes mistakes and nobody is perfect; that the principal makes mistakes, the teachers make mistakes, and your parents make mistakes; it's nothing to be ashamed of. There is no reason to get upset about it, he is going to be making a lot of mistakes in his life and we learn through our mistakes. That's the way I would handle that one.